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PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING RECESS IN GEORGIA  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

LORI MORRISON

(Under the Direction of Barbara J. Mallory)

ABSTRACT

The researcher's purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools, their recess practices, their considerations in developing recess, their guidelines of implementing recess, and principal's demographics.

The quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (1999)-program version 11.0. The researcher developed a Likert-scale survey that was mailed to 500 Georgia elementary principals. Two hundred ten principals completed and returned the questionnaire.

In the overarching question, the researcher proposed to examine the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. The following findings support principals' perceived recess positively in Georgia elementary schools with an above average level of agreement.

In sub-question 1, seven recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals were analyzed by the researcher. The researcher's findings revealed that principals had a 62% or higher total percentage of agreement rating.

In sub-question 2, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school were analyzed by nine recess considerations. The researcher's findings revealed that principals had a 54% or higher total percentage of agreement rating, except Consideration 1.

In sub-question 3, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools were analyzed by six guidelines. The researcher's findings revealed that principals had an 80% or higher total percentage of agreement rating.

In sub-question 4, the researcher examined principal's demographics to determine the differences in their perceptions of school recess.

In regards to gender, the researcher's findings revealed that there was no significant difference between male or female with general perceptions, practices, or considerations. There was a significant difference in the way male and female looked at guidelines. Female principals had a higher level of agreement in the guidelines.

In regards to race, the findings confirmed that there were no significant differences in considerations and implementation. There was a significant difference in principals' general perceptions and practices. Caucasians had a higher level of agreement in principals' general perceptions and practices.

No significant difference was found in principals' responses regarding perceptions of recess in level of experience and degree level.

**INDEX WORDS:** Recess, Principals' perception, Elementary school

PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING RECESS IN GEORGIA  
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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DOCTORATE OF EDUCATION

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2006

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to God and to my parents. I thank them for the guidance, support, strength, and knowledge necessary to accomplish my goal.

Throughout my life, my parents have demonstrated patience and guidance. Without their love and support, I would not be the person that I am today. They have truly supported me throughout my life. Since birth, I have been encouraged to dream and to reach for my dreams. My parents have always supported all of my accomplishments. The words of encouragement from my parents, made me feel that I could pursue anything. My parents have been thoughtful and understanding through the best and worst of times. They're always ready with words of encouragement. They have always listened, given advice, and showered me with love and support.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In America, public schools were institutions that provide equal access to education for all children. The educators who were to provide for their safety, as well as their learning protected the rights of children within schools. The school day was structured to include instructional time, lunch, and sometimes breakfast in the elementary school. Historically, schools provided a time for students to play, which was implemented during periods of the school day known as “recess.”

The dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought with it the educational reform of standards and accountability. When President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), schools across the country reexamined their practices, procedures, and daily schedules. The perceived need for instructional time to teach the curriculum standards resulted in many schools looking for ways to create that time. Some principals adjusted the school schedule to eliminate or significantly reduce the amount of time students had for recess. Ohanian (2002) wrote, “In the name of standards, of making sure young children acquire what were billed as ‘skills for the global economy,’ schoolchildren across the country had no playtime” (p. 2). Organizations, such as the American Association for the Child’s Right to Play, began to advocate for the protection of recess ([www.ipausa.org](http://www.ipausa.org)). Recess was being reduced for a variety of reasons in the climate of high expectations and the pressure to increase academic achievement during the era of accountability (Bishop & Curtis, 2001; Jarret, 2002; MacLachlan, 1998; Tyler, 2000; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001). In Georgia, the legislators reacted to the protection

of instructional time by passing legislation in 2004 that allowed the time for recess to be considered part of the instructional day.

In 2003, House Bill 1013 was written and introduced to the House by concerned teachers, parents and researchers to ensure Georgia middle and elementary school students receive daily scheduled breaks ([www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us)). General Assembly found, determined, and declared House Bill 1013:

that virtually no middle schools in Georgia allowed students to have a scheduled break or recess during the day; growing number of elementary schools in Georgia no longer had daily recess; children became progressively inattentive when deprived of a significant break or recess; periodic mental breaks had been shown to improve memory; research had shown that children, especially those with attention deficit disorder, were more on-task and less fidgety after a break or recess; research showed that children were active 59 percent of the time during recess; children who were inactive in school also tended to be inactive after school; in the 20 years since some Georgia school systems abolished recess in elementary school, the rate of childhood obesity had doubled. One in four children in America was obese, increasing the risks of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type II diabetes. Low activity was considered a cause of obesity; while several studies suggested that test scores either stayed same or slightly increased when a break was provided, there was no research that supported that providing breaks lower tests scores; and it was appropriate for daily scheduled breaks to come from an already mandated



instructional hours. Federal labor regulations stated that breaks' promoted the efficiency of the employees and were customarily paid for as working time. They were counted as hours worked. Each local board of education should have scheduled time for all students in kindergarten and grades one through eight a daily recess period consisting of at least 15 minutes of supervised, unstructured activity time, preferably outdoors. Recess should not have been withheld from a student as discipline ([www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)).

For the purposes of Code Section 20\_2\_290, this chapter, and by this Code section should have been considered as academic instruction. Local boards of education should have established policies to ensure that recess was a safe experience for students and that recess was scheduled so that it provided a break during academic learning ([www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)).

In April 2004, Governor Sonny Perdue supported House Bill 1190, which was included as House Amendment 20-2-323 (Georgia General Assembly, 2004). House Bill 1190 passed in 2004 by the state of Georgia legislation stated that each local board of education in Georgia may have established written policies on the provision of unstructured daily break for students K-8 consisting of at least 15 minutes of supervised, unstructured activity time, preferably outdoors. The break allowed by this Code section shall be considered as academic instruction, but the break shall not be part of the Quality Core Curriculum and shall not be subject to requirements for the Quality Core Curriculum. The break shall not be replacement for physical education or structured physical activity. Local boards of education may have established policies to ensure that the break is a safe experience for students, that recess is scheduled so that it provides a

break during academic learning, and that recess is not used as reward or punishment on a regular basis. Local boards were required to create by January 1, 2005, a policy that either allows or prohibits an unstructured break time for students grades K-8.

House Bill 1190 became law in 2004 in Georgia. This bill led to the creation of procedures to be implemented in all local school districts by January 2005. In the Cobb County school district, Mark Anderson, Supervisor, Health & Physical Education; Dr. Will Rumbaugh, Director, Elementary Curriculum and Instruction; and Terry Poor, Director, Middle School Curriculum and Instruction wrote the Cobb County School District provision regarding “recess” in 2003-2004 school year in response to a change in state law. They included the provision in Administrative Rule (Preservation of Instructional Time), which was available in the on-line Manual of Administrative Rules and Forms. The section on recess reads as follow: C. Unstructured Break Time (Recess) in Grades K-8.

1. Grades K-5: In accordance with Georgia Code each elementary school principal, with input from grade level teachers, the Director of Elementary Curriculum, and their Area Assistant Superintendent, should determine if unstructured breaks were to be held. If the determination was made to hold unstructured break time, the elementary school principal should establish guidelines that: define length, frequency, timing and location of breaks for students; state whether or not breaks could be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons, and the conditions under which such breaks could be

withheld; ensure break time was well supervised and safe; and ensure that each student received maximum instructional time to support increased student achievement.

2. Grade 6-8: Middle school students were required to have 300 minutes in the academic block of classes. Additionally, middle school students participated in connections classes and the middle school health and physical education program. Middle school students had unstructured, supervised, scheduled break time from instruction during class changes. Additional unstructured break time is not authorized at the middle school level.

The new law in Georgia provided the principal with the power, along with a team, to decide the status of recess as “unstructured break time.” For example, one elementary school principal in Cobb County examined the new law and then formed a team to address the recess issue. At Bullard Elementary, the principal met with the grade level teachers to establish how to implement recess policy. Using the guidelines from the Cobb County local board, Bullard Elementary decided to provide unstructured, free play recess for grades kindergarten to fifth a minimal of fifteen minutes. They also decided that teachers could be allowed to sit students out for a few minutes for discipline in the classroom, but not the entire recess break.

The principal’s power, as a result of his or her organizational position, became a major influence in the outcome of the implementation of this new “recess” policy. Power and education policy cannot be separated as the play of power shapes the outcomes of the

policy process (Fowler, 2000). Fowler (2000) also asserts that educators were likely to oppose implementing policies that conflicted with their basic values. The role and position of recess within the school day, then, may be dependent on educators' professional beliefs and values about the role of play in a child's life.

### The Importance of the Concept of Play in a Child's Life

Play was an integration of releasing energy and an acquisition of appropriate social skills. The release of energy allowed the child to acquire and maintain the ability to focus on learning and the knowledge of social skills allowed a child to play a productive part in society (Bishop & Curtis, 2001). Research revealed that play was very important in the brain development of children, in their academic development in school, in their health and physical development, in their language development, in their social and emotional adjustments, and in the classroom behavior (Strom, 1981; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001). Indoor and outdoor play, solitary and cooperative play, dramatic play, and directed and free play were various types of play that children engaged in at home and in school.

The concept of play could be directly linked to learning at school and the academic development of the child. Through play, children enhanced their vocabulary and language by experiencing rule setting, negotiating, choosing which game to play, and experience socialization while playing. These skills were then translated into learning to read and write. Children learned how to express their ideas and feelings and to make their first attempts at symbolic representation (Pellegrini, 1995). Play was also important for integrating and understanding content across the curriculum and experiences they had in everyday life. Play also helped children develop thoughts and concepts while teaching

problem solving, exploration, investigation, cooperation, communication, and social skills (Gardner, 1995). Through play, children experienced environments and discoveries that presented opportunities to gain valuable knowledge by making sense of their world and new knowledge (Bishop & Curtis, 2001; Strom, 1971, 1978, 1981).

The concept of play was also important in a child's social development as he or she developed academically. Learning how to play with others was the foundation for interaction throughout the school experience and into adulthood; skills were developed to assist in conflict resolution, sharing and taking turns. Play, in the role of social development, helped children learn to deal with issues of justice and fairness. Conflict could occur in any situation and play provided opportunities for children to practice generosity, fairness, tolerance, understanding, and other key social development traits (Bishop & Curtis, 2001; Strom, 1971, 1978, 1981).

#### Overview of Recess in the Elementary School Day

Historically, schools provided an opportunity for play during the school day. This time was commonly referred to as recess. Recess constituted a break in the day set aside to allow children the time for active, free play (Gardner, 1995). Recess was a period of time taken away from the tasks at hand: a change of pace. Recess was a time when students could play freely, making their own choices and using their imaginations (Tyler, 2000). Moreover, recess was the time in the school day for the concept of play to influence the child's academic and social development, as well as the child's emotional needs. This time in the school day not only contributed to the child's cognitive and intellectual needs, but also allowed cultural exchange where children associated with children of different cultures. This break in the day was an important part of the day for

students to be physically active, to talk with their peers, and to play freely (O'Brien, 1998; Tutelian, 2001). Because of the importance of this time in a child's development, recess in school had been viewed as a necessary part of the school day. School principals had been advised not to use recess as a reward, taken away as a means of punishment, or used as a time to make up work (Gardner, 1995). Unstructured play gave children the opportunity to exercise their sense of wonder, thus, leading to exploration, followed by use of creativity (Shaffer, 2001). Free playtime, as opposed to a supervised recess period, allowed children to become more independent, express themselves more openly, and removed the boundaries of the classroom setting (MacLachlan, 1998; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001).

#### *Benefits of Recess in the School Day*

There were few studies of recess in elementary schools; however, some studies that had been conducted had found several benefits of recess in the school day (Gardner, 1995; Jarret, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson, 1998; MacLachlan, 1998; Pellegrini & Smith, 1993; Shaffer, 2001; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001). Academic, social, and physical benefits of recess provided a rationale for the existence of recess in elementary curriculum. The benefits of "free play" on student learning, student relationships, and overall well-being indicated the positive role of recess in a child's development.

#### *Influence of recess on academic development*

Recess was a positive influence on academic development as recess enhanced a child's classroom learning. Pellegrini and Smith (1993) found that recess had educational value and significance in education. With academic development, recess

could be seen as the spacing between learning tasks. Recess gave children a mental break and helped them concentrate better in the classroom and be less fidgety. Waite-Stupiansky and Findlay (2001) conducted research on how recess, or lack of recess, influenced child development. Their findings indicated that the brain works in a cycle and needed mental breaks several times a day. The principle of massed versus distributed practice asserted that memory recall was improved when learning was spaced rather than massed; thus, students remembered more when learning was distributed over time. A recently realized benefit of recess as a break helped children pay attention. Waite-Stupiansky and Findlay (2001) found in their study that behaviors were improved through recess because students were attentive and less fidgety in the classroom. Jarret, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, and Dickerson (1998) reported students could not maintain concentration over long periods of time.

A study was conducted by Jarret et al. (1998) to observe whether students who had no recess get “off task,” i.e., whether the disruption of a recess actually hindered the students’ ability to pay attention upon returning to the classroom. Two fourth grade classes were observed on recess days and on non-recess days. The data indicated that without recess, students were on task 84.9% of the time and with recess on task 90% of the time. In addition to measuring time on task, the researchers also measured how often students become fidgety. Without recess, students were fidgety 15.8% of the time and with recess students were fidgety 6.9% of the time. These researchers found that students who were allowed recess were less fidgety, stayed focused on their tasks and remembered more.

*Influence of recess on social development*

Recess also enhanced social development by allowing for unstructured times of creativity and social instruction. Pellegrini and Smith (1993) found that students' social cognitive development was positively influenced by recess as well as their development of important social skills. Students had to negotiate and learn to compromise to play well with others. If students did not cooperate and take turns with others, their peers often ostracized them. An added advantage of recess was better classroom behavior. Pellegrini and Smith (1993) found the more participation in recess in schools related to playground activities was linked to the improvement of classroom behavior. Playgrounds were an ideal venue for students to release energy, which refreshed them for classroom learning (Jarrett et al., 1998; Nelson & Smith, 1995). Teachers could spend time teaching academics instead of redirecting students to pay attention.

*Influence of recess on physical development.*

Physical development was also an important benefit of recess. Recess helped prevent childhood obesity, by allowing children to establish physical activity habits at an early age (Gardner, 1995; MacLachlan, 1998; Shaffer, 2001; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001). Recess provided students the opportunity to exercise. Energy may have accumulated when students were engaged in activities in the classroom. Students became exhausted when engaged in a classroom activity for long periods of time. An opportunity for physical activity was needed to release energy and to change the pace of the day. Studies also showed that physical activity (exercise) might have improved brain functioning (Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001).



### *Disadvantages of Recess in the School Day*

Even though many educators recognized the benefits of recess in the school day, there were several other factors that influenced administrative decisions about the school day. In the era of testing and standards-based curriculum, many administrators and teachers found the demands of the expectations forced them to make decisions and set priorities. There were three major arguments that school administrators, superintendents, curriculum directors, principals, and other school personnel used to bring an end to recess (Jarrett et al., 1998). First, more time was needed for instruction in order to raise test scores. Secondly, Jarrett et al.'s findings revealed that administrators and other school personnel believed that recess disrupted work patterns of students by getting them excited. Lastly, Jarrett et al. found that administrators and other school personnel believed that recess encouraged aggression and anti-social behavior.

### *Recess in an Era of Accountability*

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) added increased accountability to local schools by requiring district administrators to implement challenging standards in reading and mathematics. Standardized testing and accountability for all students' growth and success forced administrators in schools to think about changing recess time to instructional time in the school day (Gardner, 1995, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). Legislators required more instructional requirements, hence, lead administrators to exclude recess from the school day. The pressures to improve test scores encouraged districts to make changes in the instructional day and in curriculum (Gardner, 1995, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). According to Gardner (1995), some schools developed recess into a 30-minute study time for those schools that were required to set aside at

least 900 hours a year for teaching learning activities. Gardner (1995) stated that there were not enough hours in the school year for recess and 900 hours of instructional time.

As decision-makers, administrators who increased instructional hours and reduced recess time were criticized because they demonstrated a lack of awareness regarding child development (Gardner, 1995; MacLachlan, 1998; Shaffer, 2001). These researchers indicated that students were less attentive when they had not had recess or a break during the instructional day. By focusing learning only in classroom activity, educators ignored all the ways children learned to collaborate through play (Gardner, 1995). Jarret (2002) indicated that recess served as a productive break from instruction. For example, Jarrett (2002) stated there was no research that showed and validated students learn better or that test scores would increase if they were seated and worked on academics all day. Jarrett stated that students' academic performance improved when productive breaks were included in the instructional day. When school districts added more instructional time and decreased recess time, schools were being counterproductive (Gardner, 1995).

In this accountability era in education, some schools tried to maintain a recess time, but they placed children in a situation that they had to eat quickly if they wanted recess at the end of a lunch period. Although some children in some schools had frequent breaks, other students in different schools were expected to engage in academics all day without a break. The decision whether to include recess as a part of the instructional day and the length and frequency of recess seemed to be largely an administrative decision. Superintendents, curriculum directors, and local school boards typically made recess policy decisions at the district level. Curriculum directors traditionally had the responsibility to recommend local policy to superintendents. The superintendent

proposed policy or policy changes to the local board of education. Often, superintendents seek the advice of their districts' curriculum directors and principals in policy development and policy changes. Recommendations were made to the local school board regarding how the policy would be implemented and established in the district's schools. Policy developments often began with needs expressed by local citizens, parents, school principals, and teachers. In Georgia, the new law HB 1190 authorized principals as a major influence in the implementation of recess.

In the state of Georgia, legislation House Bill 1013 was placed in committee in fall 2003 to emphasis academics, and the need for unstructured breaks. House Bill 1013 was written by concerned teachers, parents and researchers to ensure Georgia elementary and middle school students received daily scheduled breaks ([www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us)). House Bill 1013 was renumbered and placed in effect in March 2004 to House Bill 1190 and reworded in legislative session. This policy went into effect in January 2005. In Georgia, decisions about recess were left to individual districts. There was some agreement in Georgia with the criticism of increased instruction and reduced recess time because there was a bill suggesting recess. The purpose of the bill was to suggest at least a 15 minute break in elementary schools and in middle schools throughout Georgia. This bill recommended an unstructured break without lengthening the school day or shortening the teacher's planning period ([www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us)).

#### Statement of the Problem

Recess was an important time in the school day that addressed many developmental needs of children. There were many advantages to having recess in the school day, as children needed free time that could help their academic, social, and

physical development. However, there were three concerns expressed by educators about the continuation of recess in the school day, which centered on the need for more instructional time, the disruption of the pattern of work that students engaged in during class time, and the aggressiveness of students during free play. In order to make a rational decision about the fate of recess in the elementary school day, policy makers and educators considered the many needs of the students in this era of accountability. How free play contributed to a child's growth and development was a key factor in the decision making process, as well as the concerns about instructional time.

In weighing and considering the decisions about recess as part of the instructional day, administrators needed information to make decisions on how to develop, implement, and establish effective recess policy in schools. Therefore, the researcher's primary purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. First, the researcher examined the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals. The researcher's second purpose was to report the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school. The researcher's third purpose analyzed the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher's fourth and final purpose was to ascertain if the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess.

In this study, principals were surveyed to clarify an understanding of their perceptions they used to make choices about implementing recess in their school. In order to determine their perceptions, the researcher asked Georgia elementary principals to provide information about their specific school in terms of implementing recess.

### Research Questions

In order to fully explore and understand how the policy regarding recess was implemented in a school district, the following overarching question governed the research: What are the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools? In order to help answer the overarching question, the following sub-questions guided the research:

1. What are the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals?
2. What are the considerations of principals in developing recess time in their school?
3. What are the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools?
4. Do principal's demographics make any difference in their perceptions of school recess?

### Significance of the Study

Although research had been conducted on recess, no researchers had dealt with how recess was being implemented in Georgia or the criteria for making such decisions. This research contributed to the body of knowledge on recess by adding principals' perceptions regarding recess, recess practices used by principals, considerations of principals in developing recess time in their school, and principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in their Georgia elementary school.

The findings of this study were important in providing insight on the principals' perceptions regarding recess, recess practices used by principals, considerations of

principals in developing recess time in their school, and principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in their Georgia elementary school. The researcher illustrated to superintendents, curriculum directors, principals, local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and other decision makers the extent to which recess was implemented by principals in elementary schools.

This study was also important to professors at the university level in helping to create a focus on how principals implement policy at the school level. Professors could use the research data to instruct future educators about policy decisions and how perceptions influence decisions made at the school level.

### Research Design

The research design was a descriptive study. A survey was developed to collect information on the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools, the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools, and to ascertain if the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess.

A descriptive study was used for a frame of reference, just not the reporting of results (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). It helped describe the process of recess as it related to perceptions of principals regarding recess. A descriptive study involved the collection of data in order to answer questions concerning the present position of the sample in the study. This type of research helped to avoid the drawing of faulty conclusions by using a technique that questions what things were like, not why they were

that way (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The who, what, when, where and how of a situation was studied, not what had caused it to be this way (de Vaus; 1996; McMillan & Schumacher).

Descriptive study involved the collection of data in order to answer questions concerning the present position of the population in the study. It provided the number of times something occurs or lends itself to statistical calculations such as determining the average number of occurrences. In a descriptive study, the researcher stated the question to be answered in the study, defined the subjects, developed an instrument, constructed the questionnaire, prepared a cover letter, and lastly prepared a description and analysis of results received (de Vaus, 1996).

#### Description of the Population

The size of the population of this study consisted of 500 elementary principals in Georgia. The researcher took a random sample of the entire population of the elementary principals that served as participants in this study. The researcher obtained the list of principals from the state department of education's website ([www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)).

#### Data Collection

The researcher developed a Likert-scale survey to obtain the perceptions of principals regarding recess, their recess practices, their considerations in developing recess, their guidelines of implementing recess time, and their demographic information. Content validity was addressed by making certain the items on the instrument measure recess; the researcher studied the literature (Butcher, 1999; Gardner, 1995; Goodale & Warner, 1998; Jarrett, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson, 1998; Nelson & Smith, 1995) to create the items. Wording was used from the literature to help ensure

consistency with other researchers' views on recess. To establish the concept of validity, the researcher submitted the instrument to ten elementary principals. A cover letter and survey was sent via email. The researcher asked the principals to make recommendations of any adjustments that needed to be made to the instrument. The ten elementary principals made suggestions on how the researcher could improve the survey. The researcher took these ideas from the principals and made necessary changes.

Next, the researcher sent the instrument to another set of ten elementary principals to obtain the data to analyze the extent of reliability. They completed a draft of the instrument by reviewing the items and providing feedback for modification. Data collected at pilot study was tested for content reliability.

The researcher mailed out surveys on March 3, 2006 and cover letters to 500 elementary principals in Georgia. Two hundred and ten principals completed the surveys and returned in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided. After one week of the initial mail out, the researcher mailed out a postcard to each principal as a reminder.

#### Data Analysis

The study was a quantitative study. Data were obtained through a Likert-scaled survey. The descriptive statistics were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (1999)-program version 11.0. In using descriptive statistics, the researcher used central tendency measures to find the mean, and the standard deviation to interpret the data. The researcher also used analysis of variance to examine the f value to determine if principals' demographics made any difference in their perceptions of recess. The researcher described principals' perceptions regarding recess.



### Limitations

Limitations of this study were as follows:

1. Principals may have been reluctant to answer the survey because they did not want to reveal information about their school district.
2. The results of this study were only generalizable to Georgia. It was not generalizable to other states.

### Delimitations

1. The survey was self-reporting by principals.
2. Since there was a void in the literature concerning recess policy and the criteria for making policy decisions regarding recess, no instrument to measure these concepts was found; therefore, the researcher developed the survey.

### Definitions of Terms

The following terms had a specific meaning in this study:

Elementary and Secondary Act of 2001 – a federal law passed by Congress examined student programs through the administration of standardized tests in reading and math.

Instructional time – time in which students participated in academic subjects and teachers were evaluating activities.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) - a law that was intended to hold schools, districts, and states accountable for all students' performance and address the achievement gap between wealthy majority and poor minority students. The two main aspects of the law were accountability and testing requirements (Bush, 2002; [www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)).

The A Plus Education Reform Act of 2000 (House Bill 1187) – a reform that was intended to move Georgia out of the bottom of the national rankings regarding basic education and standardized test scores, improve student achievement, and improve Georgia schools (Keene, 2000).

Therefore, the researcher's primary purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. First, the researcher examined the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals, reported the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school, analyzed the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools, and ascertained if the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess. The researcher's introduction provided information related to the importance of play and recess in a child's life, as well as, reasons for changes in the instructional day related to accountability issues.

### Summary

Play was important in the development of a child academically, socially, and physically. Traditionally, schools provided an opportunity for play through recess. However, due to increased accountability associated with NCLB, administrators and teachers changed instructional schedules to meet academic standards implemented by the state boards of education. More instructional time was added to the school day with the hope to increase standardized test scores. With the push for higher standardized test scores and more instructional time added to the school year, school leaders were currently dealt with the value of recess in the school day.

There was really no information that currently existed about how recess was implemented and the beliefs and criteria for making such decisions. Therefore, the study explored the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools, the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools, and to ascertain if the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess.

In order to study the current state of recess in elementary schools, the researcher designed a descriptive study. A survey was utilized to gather information concerning principals' perceptions regarding recess. The sample included 500 elementary principals in Georgia that were mailed a survey developed by the researcher. Findings were reported to address the four research questions.

The researcher reported the review of research and related literature in Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Although recess has historically provided a time for children to play at school, recent emphasis on standards and accountability led some policy makers and decision-makers to study the importance of recess in the school day. Principals struggled with structuring the school day to include all of the activities and instructional time needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. Schools have been weighing the advantages of the time traditionally set aside as recess against the time teachers need to teach the curriculum. Many studies have been conducted on recess, yielding information about the relationship of recess on a child's academic, social, and physical growth and development. However, very little research has been conducted on the principal's perception of recess and recess practices since the era of accountability and standards ushered in an emphasis on protecting instructional time.

In this chapter, the researcher provided an overview of the research on the significance of play in a child's life and the relationship of recess to that research. The researcher used the literature review as a basis for the study of principal's perceptions of recess and recess implementation. In the first section, the researcher explored the concept of play at school. In the second section, the researcher presented findings from studies on the relationship of recess and child development and growth. Next, an analysis of the differences in physical education and recess was presented. In the fourth section, the researcher provided an overview of recess practices and policies in American schools,

along with the principal's role in implementing recess. A literature matrix of the major studies conducted on recess was presented (see Tables 1 and 2).

### Concept of Play at School

Play could be defined as an integration of releasing energy and an acquisition of appropriate social skills (Bishop & Curtis, 2001). The release of energy allowed the child to acquire and maintain the ability to focus on learning, which was necessary in today's schools (Bishop & Curtis, 2001). Strom (1981) stated that Jean Piaget demonstrated that much of what was called play was really the activity of intelligence. Children learned by exploring the world (Strom, 1981). Play also helped a child develop the knowledge of social skills that allowed a child to participate as a productive part of society (Bishop & Curtis, 2001).

Play was important in a child's life because children learned to communicate, socialize and learn about the world around them through play (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Thompson, Knudson, & Wilson, 1997). Play context provided appropriate support for children as they developed skills. Children retained more knowledge, focused better, and regulated behavior better in play than in any other context (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Thompson, Knudson & Wilson, 1997). Further, children practiced skills in play, and became ready to learn pre-academic skills and concepts (Bodrova & Leong, 2003).

Table 1

Major Studies Related to Recess

Study	Purpose	Participants	Design/Analysis	Outcomes
Blatchford (1998)	To determine if length of recess tends to be a problem.	Primary Schools (n= 1245)  Secondary Schools (n= 30)	Questionnaire	The results of the perceived value of recess and problems showed that pupils had time to relax, socialize, break from class activities, and release energy.
Butcher (1999)	To determine the effect of a recess intervention program.	Elementary students (n=450)	Researcher observation	Recess intervention did significantly decrease problem behaviors and violent behaviors.
Jarrett, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson (1998)	To determine the effect of a recess break on classroom behavior.	Fourth Grade Classes (n=2) two fourth grade classes with 25 -30 students each	Researcher observation  Repeated-measures multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)	Students who were allowed recess were less fidgety, stayed focused on their tasks and remembered more.
Kraft (1989)	To determine if students were absorbed in physical activity during recess.	Kindergarten through third grade elementary students (n= 369)	Research observation	Children were vigorously playing 21% of the time, and united with moderate physical activity 41% of the time during recess.
Leff, Costigan, & Power (2003)	To observe the behaviors and skills used at	Children in Elementary School	Observation by coding behavior.	Percentages of time that skills were used:

	recess.	(n= 750)		cooperative play (56.9%), rough and tumble play (17.5%), and intercultural interactions (47.7%).
Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai (2000)	To determine if three intervention strategies would reduce the rate of behavior problems through enhancing social development.	Elementary Students (n= 475)	Multiple baseline across group design	Simple involvement in teaching social behavior, active supervision, and reviewing playground rules reduced students' problem behaviors.
Pellegrini & Davis (1993)	To investigate classroom behavior as a function of gender and confinement time before recess.	Third Grade students (n= 23)	Children's Cognitive Ability Test scores  Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA)	Results indicated that children were less attentive to seat work as a function of time and longer confinement resulted in more exercise for boys and more social sedentary behavior for girls.
Pellegrini & Smith (1993)	To determine if recess is significant in the school day.	Elementary Students	Observation	Students' academic, social, and physical development was positively influenced by recess.
Scruggs, Beveridge, & Watson (2003)	To determine if physical activity occur	Fifth grade students (n= 27)	Survey ANOVA	Boys liked fitness breaks slightly better

	during physical fitness breaks or recess.		Pedometer	than girls. Fifth grade students engaged in more physical activity during fitness breaks that recess.
Thompson, Knudson, & Wilson (1997)	To conduct playground meetings before recess to examine rather children could better know one another through expressing ideas, sharing experiences, voicing concerns, and solve problems.	Teachers (n=2)	Research observation	Playground meetings helped students to work together to solve problems and support classmates.
Todd, Haugen, Anderson, Spriggs (2002)	To observe behaviors on the playground and if behaviors were positively influenced by teachers stressing recess expectations and routines prior to recess.	Elementary School (n= 1)	Survey	The intervention reduced the number of behavioral problems, improved the overall school climate, and increased staff satisfaction.



Table 2

Major Analysis of Studies Related to Recess

Study	Purpose	Outcome
Bishop & Curtis (2001)	To collect a literature review on recess and play.	Play was concerned an integration of releasing energy and an acquisition of appropriate social skills. Play also helped a child develop the knowledge of social skills that allowed a child to participate as a productive part of society. Play was important in a child's life because children learned to communicate, socialize and learn about the world around them through play.
Bodrova & Leong (2003)	To conduct a review of literature to support learning and play.	Play was important in a child's life because children learned to communicate, socialize and learned about the world around them through play. Children retained more knowledge, focused better, and regulated behavior better in play than in any other context. Children practiced skills in play, and became ready to learn pre-academic skills and concepts.
Gardner (1995)	To collect a literature review on recess.	Recess time was needed for study hall because of state requirements for instructional time. The usual 30-minute recess was vulnerable as principals fit study time in the school day. During the study time, students worked on addition skill workbooks or practiced the skills currently being taught in the

		classroom.
Goodale & Warner (1998)	To conduct research on schools in the United States decreasing recess, and schools around the world that were decreasing recess time in order to increase academic involvement and safety.	School leaders abandoned the open- the-door and run recess. The United States had begun to mirror Germany, Russia, and France that were known for their high-powered education. The demands from international competition and the economic purpose of schooling placed a change in the attitude of the United States. The school day in Germany, Russia, and France was structured around academics and short free time.
MacLachlan (1998)	To collect a literature review on recess.	Recess provided opportunities for children to build on their imaginations. Recess gave students the opportunity to relax and work on skills such as problem solving, cooperation, and patience.
Shaffer (2001)	To collect a literature review on recess.	Recess was a learning tool in that, during recess, students practiced making choices without the structure of a classroom.
Tyler (2000)	To collect research on the definition of recess.	Recess was a time when students could play freely, making their own choices and using their imaginations. Recess was the 15 to 20 minutes students received each day to enjoy the outdoors and acquire cognitive skills, social skills, and physical skills to succeed in school and to become life long learners.
Waite- Stupiansky, &	To conduct review of	Recess as an activity that

Findlay (2001)	research on the how recess or lack of recess influenced child development.	promoted brain development, attention and memory, health and physical development, language development, and better classroom behavior. Recess increased aerobic endurance, muscular strength, coordination, and control of excess weight gain.
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Frost (1998) and Towers (1997) conducted studies that connected play and child development. Frost found a connection between brain development and play during early childhood years. The early games and playfulness prepared children ready for skills needed later in life such as flexibility, inventiveness, and resourcefulness. Children were also developing motor, language, and negotiation skills. Children who did not play developed brains 20-30% smaller than children who played (Frost, 1998).

Towers (1997) found that students released built up energy accumulated during confinement in the classroom, known as the surplus energy theory. This theory saw playtime as valuable in releasing the surplus energy that accumulated during a period of confinement (for example in the classroom). Towers found four aspects of child's play on the playground that could be identified as critical in the role of child development: physical, intellectual, emotional, and social aspects of play behavior.

Children at play could be involved in different levels of play through which they combined objects, actions, verbalizations, and interactions into a sociodramatic play scene. Sociodramatic play was a combination of playing with objects and social play (Bishop & Curtis, 2001). The representational skills practiced in sociodramatic play were essentials to the child's ability to conceptualize many of the things taught in school (Ohanian, 2002; Pellegrini, 1995; Strom, 1971, 1978, 1981). Children in the early years used objects in play, which allowed them to use their senses to explore and learn about objects and determine how they related to other objects. Further, sensorimotor play, constructive play, dramatic play, and games with rules were types of play which children used objects (Bishop & Curtis, 2001; Ohanian, 2002; Pellegrini, 1995; Strom, 1971, 1978, 1981).

During social play, children learned to coordinate their behaviors and cooperate with others (Bishop & Curtis, 2001). The five different types of social play were play with adults, solitary play, parallel play, associative play, and cooperative play (Bishop & Curtis, 2001; Ohanian, 2002; Pellegrini, 1995; Strom, 1971, 1978, 1981). Through these types of social play, children learned: imitative role play; make-believe with objects; make-believe with actions and situations; interactions, verbal communication, and persistence (Strom, 1971, 1978, 1981).

Strom (1981) also stated that daydreaming could have led to reality and helped develop cognitive and creative skills. Play provided an opportunity for make believe daydream experiences that helped bridge the gap between concrete experience and abstract thought. The ability to daydream and make believe was a cognitive ability that helped children to develop a more creative and flexible approach to solve problems. Daydreaming also helped improve children's ability to suspend direct enjoyments for expectations that are desired (Strom). When children make-believed, this aided them to sit still and concentrate on the task at hand.

Strom described the stages of play: first a relaxation of regular feelings; then induction of new, play-appropriate tensions followed by relaxation at the end. Play was voluntary, because the player had the freedom to make choices and behave in the way desired. Children made choices without adult supervision (Strom, 1971, 1978). Recess provided an opportunity for play to develop and enhance skills such as, building imagination, communicating with peers, cooperation with others, developing coordination, solving problems, and enhancing vocabulary (Gardner, 1995, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000).

## Relationship of Recess and Child Development

### *Recess and Cognitive Development*

One of the major purposes of school was learning. Learning was a life long activity that occurred intentionally in formal instructional settings and incidentally through experience. Education began with a one-room schoolhouse (Clark, 1975) in which recess was part of the school day. During the instructional day, students were taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. The children played games during the noon hour, and additionally had two recesses during the day (Rose & Campbell, 1997; Stoddard, 2001). Recess was a learning tool in that, during recess, students practiced making choices without the structure of a classroom (Shaffer, 2001). Tyler (2000) stated that recess was a time when students could play freely, making their own choices and using their imaginations. Recess was the 15 to 20 minutes students received each day to enjoy the outdoors and acquire cognitive skills, social skills, and physical skills to succeed in school and to become life long learners (Tyler, 2000). Additionally, recess was a time when teachers could observe and learn more about their students in a natural environment (Gardner, 1995; Tyler, 2000). It was a period of free time for students to build imagination. Waite-Stupiansky and Findlay (2001) defined recess as an activity that promoted brain development, attention and memory, health and physical development, language development, and better classroom behavior.

Learning ranged from knowledge of simple facts to acquiring skill in complex and difficult procedures (Bee, 1992; Ormrod, 1995). During learning, students were actively involved and participated in instruction or free play. Students had the opportunity to establish, test, and repeat patterns and connections as they made meaning of the learning

situation. Learning could occur informally outside of the classroom. When learning involved real consequences, then the learning was more challenging and interesting for the students. Without opportunity for practice, even mastered abilities go away. According to Bee and Ormrod, learning could also occur through personal interactions. The three developmental domains of childhood development were enhanced through learning.

*Recess and Developmental Domains of Child Development and Growth*

The three developmental domains of child development were academic development, physical development, and social development and these developmental domains were enhanced by the learning components (Ormrod, 1995). Psychologists recognized these three developmental domains common to all child development (Ormrod, 1995).

First, academic development referred to how well or how quickly a child could perform cognitive tasks or obtain skills that one learns to complete other tasks (Ormrod, 1995). In academic development, the way events were perceived by students often changed and altered the information learned and remembered (Ormrod, 1995). Children developed intellectual constructs and cognitive skills which should be understood through hands-on, manipulative, exploratory behavior that occurs during play.

Secondly, physical development referred to the strength and coordination skills that made up virtually all complex motor tasks that required practice (Ormrod, 1995). According to National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Department of Education [NAECSSDE] (2001), physical movement was essential for healthy growth and development. Through movement, children learned about the bodies' capabilities

and how to control the body. Physical activities fueled the brain with a better supply of blood and provided brain cells with a healthy supply of natural substances which enhanced brain growth and helped the brain make a greater number of connections between neurons. The connections made the brain better able to process a variety of information, thus led to improved retention of facts, a greater understanding of concepts, and subsequently higher achievement (NAECSSDE, 2001).

Thirdly, social development could be defined as the way students related to the people and objects in the world around them (Bee, 1992). Students learned many basic social skills in relationships between peers as well as adults. These basic skills included cooperation, competition, and intimacy. Social development began at birth and continued rapidly through early childhood years. Close relationships with peers contributed to both social and academic development (Bee; NAECSSDE, 2001; Ormrod, 1995). Social developments as well as the aforementioned domains were enriched through play.

Recess and time for free play influenced child growth and development through the academic, physical, and social domains (Jarrett, 2002). Therefore, recess could serve as a useful purpose in the instructional day as it related to the major purpose of schooling, teaching, and learning. Considering the three development domains, students created different play situations through their imaginative play (Tyler, 2000). They were engaged in a complex level of play during recess where they combined the use of objects, actions, verbalizations, and interaction (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Tyler, 2000). The foundations lied with how students interact with one another. Maturity levels changed as well as their ability to pretend. Students mastered the necessary skills of creativity,



representation, and interaction. These skills assisted in enhancing the developmental domains of academic, social, and physical development (Bodrova & Leong, 2003).

Recess contributed to the academic, social, and physical development of a child because recess was one of the few places that all of the developmental domains were positively enhanced (Gardner, 1995; Kieff, 2001; Lindsay, 1994; Mulrine, 2000; Ramsburg, 1998; Schwartz & Kirkpatrick; 2001, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). Therefore, it was critical for educators of children to understand the development domains in relation to the children as students in the elementary school.

#### *Academic development and recess*

With academic development, students used their curiosity, imagination, and creativity to build on their knowledge about the content disciplines, such as literacy, language arts, reading, math, science, social studies, art, physical education, health, and safety (Shaffer, 2001). Students needed physical activity and a freedom to choose their favorite pastime. This affected their academic development in a positive way. Butcher stated that certain cognitive tasks were increased because energy was released so students pay more attention to academics. Bodrova and Leong (2003) reviewed a number of studies on recess that supported evidence that recess contributed to advances in students' verbalization, vocabulary, language comprehension, attention span, imagination, concentration, impulse control, curiosity, problem-solving strategies, cooperation, empathy, and group participation. This research provided additional evidence of the strong connections between recess and children's readiness for school instruction. Specifically, researchers linked recess to children's ability to master such academic content as literacy and mathematics (Jensen, 1998).

Students' engagement with recess was positively and significantly correlated with text comprehension, metalinguistic activities, and the understanding of the purpose of reading and writing (Bodrova & Leong, 2003). Therefore, recess should never be eliminated because of its positive effect on early academic development (Shaffer, 2001). Recess had educational value and educational relevance (Pellegrini, 1995).

Similarly, recess provided opportunities for children to build on their imaginations (MacLachlan, 1998). Tyler (2000) reported that academic activities took place during games and recess. Students tried new roles and took risks in a safe setting with a variety of equipment created to enhance their recess activities. Students practiced and developed social studies curricular skills by enacting roles of parents, child, firefighter, grocer, teacher, and superhero (Tyler, 2000). Students mentally placed themselves in others' places and experienced the world from another point of view. Tyler's research also reported that students also learned and practiced skills such as language, social, and concept development (Tyler, 2000). Recess contributed to student ability to explain, describe, articulate, construct sentences, and seek information. Recess promoted verbal expressions as students keep moving, heard themselves talk, and blended their speech and actions with others their age (Tyler, 2000). Hence, students increased their word power (Tyler, 2000).

Waite-Stupiansky and Findlay (2001) and Jarrett (2002) conducted an in-depth review of research that studied how recess or lack of recess influenced child development. These studies on brain development and physical activity indicated a positive relationship between movement and thinking. Physical activity was related to attention and memory, and children should be attentive in order to learn. Waite-

Stupiansky and Findlay and Jarrett found information that children learned better when material was spaced rather than massed. The brain worked in a cycle and needed mental breaks several times a day. Through recess, children enhanced their language development and increased their vocabulary through rule setting, negotiating, choosing which game to play, exclamations while playing. These skills were translated into learning to read and write. (Jarrett, 2002; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001). Jarrett (2002) found research on brain functioning declares that: attention required broken up frequently, the brain needed down time to recycle chemicals critical for long-term memory, and attention involved 90 to 110 minute patterns throughout the day. Students in elementary schools lost their attention span when recess was postponed, which resulted in more active play when recess occurred.

Students were also less fidgety when recess was held at its scheduled time (Jarrett, 2002). Jarrett (2002) noted that a break from academics was considered essential for satisfaction and alertness. Memory recall was improved when learning was spaced rather than massed (Jarrett, 2002). With recess, children had a mental change and had the opportunity to release energy. When returning to the classroom, the child's attention was focused on academic tasks and minimized disruptive behavior (Gardner, 1995; Kieff, 2001; Lindsay, 1994; Mulrine, 2000; Ramsburg, 1998; Schwartz & Kirkpatrick, 2001, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000).

Researchers concurred that recess encouraged a playful, imaginative approach for students as they handled and explored materials and equipment (Bodrova & Leong, 2003). Recess built students' ability to use complex language and flexible approaches to problem solving. As one of the major purposes of schooling was learning, it seemed that

recess could be an effective instructional tool in the academic development of children.

A time for free play can also be effective in a child's social development, which was another focus in the elementary school's mission to help all children grow and develop as productive citizens.

### *Social development and recess*

With social development, students learned how to work successfully in groups, the core component of success for students and adults in work, family, civic, and community contexts (Butcher, 1999; Perry & Bussey, 1984). Students also learned how to resolve disputes and conflicts. Social interaction was essential to a student's linguistic and cognitive development (Butcher, 1999). Recess was a time when children had the opportunity to interact with peers by developing a respect for rules, gaining self-discipline, and constructing an appreciation for other's cultures and beliefs (Tyler, 2000). A wide range of skills were practiced and learned, such as cooperation, sharing, language, and conflict resolution (Tyler, 2000).

Recess was a time when students engaged in experiences that shape their positive self-esteem (Gardner, 1995; Tyler, 2000). By focusing learning only in the classroom, educators pay no attention to all the ways students could have learned to collaborate through recess (Gardner, 1995). Through recess, students found ways to communicate their ideas, gain cooperation of others, and respond to the ideas of others.

Further, Gardner (1995) indicated that the business world offered times for adult relaxation by having breaks and lunch hours. Educators should have realized the important skills that students learned through having breaks, too. Breaks (recess) gave students the opportunity to relax and work on skills such as problem solving, cooperation,

and patience (MacLachlan, 1998). Recess provided opportunities for children to develop coping skills. Recess also allowed students to be spontaneous, release energy, laugh out loud, make choices, share with others, and learn from others (Clements & Jarrett, 2000; MacLachlan, 1998).

Butcher (1999), Thompson, Knudson, and Wilson (1997), Pellegrini and Glickman (1989), and Jarret (2002) suggested that recess was a time when students learned many social skills by promoting social development while on the playground. For example, students had the opportunity to practice with games of competition that allowed experiments with social strategies. Students learned cooperation through solving problems, taking turns, and working together. Students also learned the important social skill of teamwork (Butcher, 1999).

Thompson, Knudson, and Wilson examined two elementary school teachers who conducted playground meetings before going to recess. At the beginning of the meeting, the teacher asked the children what was happening on the playground. The children took turns telling stories about experiences on the playground. The teachers asked questions to clarify questions, concerns, and responses. The teacher also taught new concepts about social interactions during this time and asked children to solve problems. The meetings gave teachers the opportunity to interact with the children more and investigate the conflicts and situations. The teachers and children worked together to come up with solutions through understanding and support. The teachers used the meetings for the children to share experiences, express ideas, voice concerns, and solve problems (Thompson, Knudson, & Wilson, 1997).

After observing a playground, the researchers found that recess facilitated the learning of a wide range of social skills needed to become citizens, such as sharing using negative and persuasive language to learn how to negotiate with others. Students also acquired the social skills of making choices. Recess was a time when students could interact freely and learn skills without adult supervision (Pellegrini & Glickman, 1989). When students learned playground interventions, they transferred those same behaviors to classroom activities (Jarrett, 2002). Jarret (2002) testified that for some students, this was the only time they received social interaction, because after school they would go home and become engrossed in the television or computer.

Recess was a developmentally appropriate outlet for reducing stress in children, and allowed children the opportunity to make choices, plan, and expand their creativity; recess also was an important element of classroom management and behavior (Kieff, 2001). Breaks provided the transition from one subject to the next. Children's exposures to recess enhanced skills such as active talk with peers and free play because learning occurred in ways not possible inside the regular classroom. Leff, Costigan, and Power (2003) performed a study to observe the behaviors and skills used at recess. The participants were 750 children in an elementary school grades kindergarten through fourth. The researchers reported the percentages of the time skills were implemented: cooperative play (56.9%), rough and tumble play (17.5%), and intercultural interactions (47.7%). Pellegrini and Smith (1993) reviewed chapters, books, and articles on the topic of play and recess in schools. Their findings were similar to Jarret et al. in that the duration of recess in schools related to playground activities was proportional to the improvement of classroom behavior. Students' social development was positively

influenced by recess. Recess had educational value and was significant in education (Pellegrini & Smith 1993; Todd, Haugen, Anderson, & Spriggs, 2002).

Another benefit of recess in a child's social development was the effect of free play on classroom behavior. Some research revealed positive effects on classroom behavior as a result of recess. Jarrett's (2002) research showed that students who were allowed recess were less fidgety; stay focused on their tasks, and remembered more when there are breaks in their day.

Pellegrini (1995) studied recess at a later date and found that recess offered children the opportunity to "blow off steam" known as the surplus energy theory. Recess could have been used to allow students to be involved in physical activity to reduce high energy from children who had sat for long periods of time. When children returned to the classroom, they concentrated on school work. The evidence that was given for this surplus energy theory involved children being fidgety and exhibited low attention spans. Research from Pellegrini indicated that timing and duration of recess related to playground activity helped children to be successful in maintaining appropriate classroom behavior. Recess positively enhanced temperament and instructional focus (Pellegrini, 1995).

Pellegrini & Davis (1993) conducted a study to investigate classroom behavior as a function of gender and confinement time before recess. The participants were 23 third grade students. Pellegrini & Davis used two standardized test scores (Iowa Test of Basic Skills and Cognitive Abilities Test) to evaluate children's abilities for certain analyses. Pellegrini & Davis also observed two treatment conditions: shorter confinement time for recess period and longer confinement time for recess period. The children had to wait

thirty additional minutes for the longer confinement time. Pellegrini & Davis observed prerecess, post recess, and recess. Children's behaviors in the classroom and on the playground were recorded on checklists by the following: fidgeting, concentration, nonsocial exercise, social exercise, vigor of exercise, nonsocial sedentary, social sedentary, and duration interval within recess. The effects of confinement time before recess indicated that children, especially boys, were more restless, while completing seatwork. As the time increased, so did fidgeting. Post recess results indicated that children who engaged in physical activity were more attentive when returned to class. Children who engaged in less vigorous physical activity, but they engaged in social activity were also more attentive. The findings in the study indicated that recess did different things for different children. For boys, recess provided opportunities for physical activity, active social play and nonsocial play. For girls, recess provided opportunities for less physical activity and more social activity (Pellegrini & Davis, 1993). Jarret et al. (1998) data stated children's behavior in the classroom after recess and at the same time of the day, when they did not have recess, showed that children were much more fidgety and off-task without being exposed to recess.

Providing a time for free play during the school day offered the opportunity for children to develop social skills, which could be related to their success in learning in the classroom. Preventing off-task behavior during instructional time and preventing discipline problems could also lead to a teacher's opportunity to enhance the student's self-esteem. Social development and good self-esteem of students increased the positive learning environment necessary in schools.



*Physical development and recess*

Through physical development, students had learning experiences that attend to the physical needs for movement, rest, play, and fine and gross motor development and fitness (Juelsgaard, 1996; Tyler, 2000; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay 2001). When physical needs were considered, students were able to release energy and had a break to get refreshed, which directly affected a child's behavior in the classroom (Butcher, 1999). Recess provided young children with the opportunity to move and participate in physical activities. Children sat in a classroom, listened attentively for periods of time, which led a need to release energy (Jensen, 1998; NAECCSDE, 2001). On the playground, children were given the opportunity to move around and be active. When returning to the classroom, children were more attentive and able to concentrate on tasks. Recess enabled learning to take place more efficiently (NAECCSDE, 2001).

Some researchers (Jensen, 1998; Juelsgaard, 1996; Tyler, 2000; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay 2001) discussed the benefits of recess for children's physical development. They argued that recess should not be eliminated from the school day because recess helped develop motor skills and assisted in the child's exploration and understanding of the environment around them. Students who were engaged in daily movement activities showed excellent motor fitness. Motor stimulation should be integrated across the curriculum, because the brain was linked to movement. Also, exercise had a positive effect on cognitive processes (Gardner, 1995; Jarrett, 2002; Kieff, 2001; Lindsay, 1994; Mulrine, 2000; Ramsburg, 1998; Schwartz & Kirkpatrick; 2001, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). Movement and exercise fueled the brain with oxygen and neurotrophins (high

nutrient food) to enhance growth and greater connections between neurons (Jensen, 1998; Juelsgaard 1996; Tyler; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001).

In addition, recess provided children time to develop important physical skills and exercises that their muscles (MacLachlan, 1998; Tyler, 2000). Free play at recess provided opportunities for children to strengthen their arms on the monkey bars or legs on the soccer field. With so many adults experiencing health problems from being overweight, schools had the responsibility to encourage physical activity for students and to provide ample opportunities for physical development (Tyler, 2000; MacLachlan, 1998).

Waite-Stupiansky and Findlay (2001) and Jarrett (2002) conducted an in-depth review of research that found physical activity influenced health development by lowering blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Children that were overweight may be at risk for heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, colon cancer, and depression. Physical activity promoted muscular strength, growth of heart, lungs and other important organs (Jarrett, 2002; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001). Physical development was critical in growing children, and it was important for educators to understand the difference in free play and physical education curriculum in elementary schools.

#### Differences in Physical Education and Recess

In contrasting recess and physical education, MacLachlan (1998) explained that recess was not the same as structured physical education. Recess was an unstructured time where students made up their own rules. Physical education was part of the total educational program that contributed primarily through movement experiences to the total growth and development of all the children. Physical education through movement

was an instructional program that gave attention to all learning domains: psychomotor, cognitive, and affective. Physical education assisted children to learn motor and lifetime activity skills. Physical education was a structured, planned curriculum that had established goals and objectives. A teacher led students in age-appropriate exercises that were physically appropriate for the students. Physical education was structured and organized, unlike recess that was unstructured. Recess offered the opportunity for free play, where the students had the freedom to explore different activities and make their own choices. In physical education, the students were taught skills often in groups with close supervision. During recess, children were not taught specific skills each day, but students learned a variety of academic skills, social skills, and physical skills throughout the year in a real-world opportunity (Gardner, 1995; Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000).

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education articulated that physical education (an instructional program that relates to physical activity and performance) cannot take the place of recess (Children Need Recess [CNR], 2004). CNR (2004) identified the value of physical education in the elementary school related to strenuous physical activity. Jensen (1998) reported research that related how physical exercise related to brain functioning. During physical workout, the part of the brain involved in almost all learning, the cerebellum, was functioning at the highest level.

In a Canadian study involving more than 500 school children, those who spent an extra hour everyday in a gym class far outperformed at exam time then those who did not exercise. Jensen's research revealed that among three test groups, the one that had the aerobic exercise improved short term memory, reaction time, and creativity. When physical education time was increased by one-third of the school day, academic scores

went up (Jensen, 1998). Jarret (2002) found research in French and Canadian schools over a period of four years showed positive effects of time spent in physical activity. The results of spending one-third of the school day in formal and less formal physical education, in art, and in music increased fitness, improved attitudes, and slight improvements in test scores. These results were consistent with the findings of a meta-analysis of nearly 200 studies on the effect of exercise on cognitive functioning that suggested that physical activity supports learning (Jarret, 2002).

Just as recess enhanced the opportunity for academic, social, and physical development of children, the physical education teacher could also engage students in skills that enhanced student growth and development, but in a different manner and through a structured curriculum. Students' academic, social, and physical development was positively influenced by recess, and recess had educational value and was significant in education (Pellegrini & Smith, 1993).

Recent research about learning produced findings that recess had definite educational benefits beyond fun. Blatchford (1998) administered a national survey on recess and lunchtime in elementary and secondary schools. The sample size consisted of 1245 primary and 300 secondary schools that represented 6% of schools in England. The researchers studied four aspects of recess, including duration, supervision, pupil behavior, and perceived value and problems. The results reported the following findings concerning the length of recess in schools. Morning recesses for infant and junior schools were longer than secondary schools. The calculations of the afternoon recess were in percentages by which schools had a break: infant (70%), junior (58%), and secondary (23%). The reason the duration for recess was shortened for all levels was to

increase teaching time and reduce behavior problems. In the study, supervision was divided into three groups: teaching staff (head teachers and department heads), support staff (educational support assistants, welfare assistants, nursery nurses), and ancillary staff (lunchtime supervisors). The findings of supervision reported that supervision at the secondary level was spread more thinly. The findings of pupil behavior related to recess showed that behavior at the primary level improved with recess while secondary level stayed the same. The results of the perceived value of recess and problems showed that pupils had time to relax, socialize, break from class activities, and release energy (Blatchford, 1998).

### Recess Policies in American Schools

#### *Rationale for Elimination of Recess*

Although many benefits of recess had been examined, in today's era of accountability, many school administrators were making decisions about the elimination of recess in the school day. The elimination of recess was occurring for many reasons (Ramsburg, 1998). Some of these reasons were: increased school accountability, student testing procedures, and more time is needed for instruction to raise student achievement (Tyler, 2000). The pressures of school accountability, with its emphasis on testing children to meet state, local, and national standards, had been a reason for the decline in recess (Gardner, 1995; Tyler, 2000). Some policy makers and administrators expressed that recess: was a waste of time, detracted from an already crowded and long school day, and encouraged aggression and anti-social behavior on the playground (Gardner, 1995; Ramsburg, 1998; Shaffer, 2001). However, Jarrett, et al. (1998) claimed that there was no research that indicated that children learned better or test scores improved if they

remain seated throughout the school day (Gardner, 1995; Ramsburg, 1998; Shaffer, 2001).

Although many believe recess was being eliminated or reduced as a scheduled time in the elementary school day due to an increased focus on academics, there were other issues that had led to the demise of recess. Some of these concerns included injuries, safety, and lack of supervision. Tyler (2000) found that recess was being eliminated due to the increase in school district concerns regarding shortage of adult supervision. The possibility of lawsuits if children were injured on the playground or come in contact with dangerous strangers was another issues that had been considered in the elimination of recess from the daily schedule (MacLachlan, 1998; Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000).

One other reason that recess was cut from the school day was the inclusion of physical education as part of the curriculum. Some schools explained that physical education was more beneficial than free time at recess, or students should spend that time inside the classroom focusing on academics. Even though recess and physical education were different, some educators and parents believed they were more similar than different. Kraft (1989) and Scruggs, Beveridge, and Watson (2003) conducted studies to determine if there was evidence that structured physical activity (fitness breaks) significantly increased children's physical activity more than recess. Kraft wanted to explore if students were absorbed in physical activities during recess. In this study, the participants were 369 students in a kindergarten through third grade elementary school. The findings in his study indicated that children were vigorously playing 21% of the time, and united with moderate physical activity 41% of the time during recess. Active

behavior was demonstrated 65% of the time when combining all four types of play. Boys were significantly more active than girls (Kraft, 1989). Structured fitness breaks were found to be similar in relation to recess with activity patterns.

Scruggs, Beveridge, and Watson conducted a study with twenty-seven fifth grade students who were the participants in the study. A two-question Likert survey was used to assess participant's perceptions of recess fitness breaks. The results for the Likert scale were boys' and girls' liking of recess did not differ significantly. Boys liked fitness breaks better than girls. The data supported that fifth grade students engaged in more physical activity during fitness breaks than recess, as measured by heart rate and pedometer (Scruggs, Beveridge, & Watson, 2003).

Another case against recess was parental expectations of schooling. Pellegrini and Glickman stated that most parents had the assumption that education was the "three R's". They thought that it was important for their children to learn reading and math. Some parents did not realize that social skills were important as well, and there was not an understanding of the role of academic, social, and physical domains in child growth and development. Some parents thought that recess interfered with academics. Recess was viewed as off-task behavior, where students were messy, noisy, and unstructured. Some policy makers and administrators expressed that recess was a waste of time, and parents supported their view of this free time in school.

Goodale and Warner (1998) noted in research that not only were schools in the United States decreasing recess, but schools around the world were decreasing recess time in order to increase academic involvement and safety, too. Labeled recess extraneous to the serious business of learning, many school leaders in the United States

cancelled recess (Goodale & Warner, 1998). They abandoned the open- the-door and run recess (Goodale & Warner, 1998). The United States had begun to mirror Germany, Russia, and France that were known for their high-powered education (Goodale & Warner, 1998). The demands from international competition and the economic purpose of schooling placed a change in the attitude of the United States on recess at school. The school day in Germany, Russia, and France was structured around academics and short free time. These countries had recess in the past, but educators now used this time for academic learning. Jarret et al. found that while some countries outside the United States had recess, some parts of the United States continued to decrease or eliminate recess. Jarret et al. noted that some British schools had three recess breaks a day; Japanese schools had recess breaks after 45 minutes of instruction; and Taiwanese schools had many recess breaks a day (Jarret, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson, 1998). Therefore, it seemed that there was not concurrence on the need for recess in today's global economy and era of accountability. Some educators still valued that play was central to learning, and had educational value, whereas other educators focus on academics, and recess was not part of the educational day (Goodale & Warner, 1998).

Another case against recess as part of the school day was the amount of aggression and behavior problems that derive from children engaged in free play. Bullying and diversity had been factors in some schools that had resulted in demands for closer supervision. Some educators stated that recess should be eliminated because of the unkind and uncaring behaviors exhibited on the playground (Gardner, 1995). Although elementary schools taught social skills to elementary students to prevent bullying and to appreciate diversity, many educators hesitated to allow free play for students to practice



such skills. Research conducted by Lewis, Colvin, and Sugai (2000) studied elementary students to determine if three intervention strategies would reduce the rate of observed behavior problems through enhancing social development. The three strategies were: teaching effective social skills, teaching playground rules, and active supervision. In their study, Lewis, Colvin, and Sugai stated three trends that were a concern: recess safety, inadequacy of appropriate supervision, and children engaging in inappropriate interactions due to lack of social skills. The study included kindergarten through fifth grade students. The researchers indicated that simple involvement in teaching social behavior, active supervision on the playground, and reviewing playground rules reduces students' problem behaviors (Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai, 2000). Although there were means to address the behavior concerns, some were not willing to focus instructional time on social skills.

Todd, Haugen, Anderson, and Spriggs (2002) conducted a school wide study that observed behaviors on the playground and if behaviors were positively influenced by teachers stressing recess expectations and routines prior to recess. The negative behaviors observed before were: fighting, teasing, chasing, and engaging in repeated minor offenses. An intervention plan was developed and implemented by an elementary school effective behavior support team to decrease the negative behaviors. To implement the plan, the support team developed and distributed recess guidelines to all staff, reviewed recess guidelines with the staff, and conducted workshops. The teachers reviewed the rules, expectations, and routines with the students at least once a month, used school wide consequences process for acknowledgements, implemented behavior expectations, and at the end of the year completed a survey. To collect data, Todd et al.

used discipline referrals from recess and a staff survey. The survey consisted of: teacher's perceptions of the classroom instructional time spent to teach recess expectations and routines, willingness to repeat recess workshops, and the impact of teaching recess on student behavior. The researchers indicated that the intervention reduced the number of behavioral incidences, improved the overall school climate, and increased staff satisfaction. The intervention process made the playground a safe and respectful environment with free play, recess without the negative behavior; which, in turn became a part of the day that students and staff enjoyed (Todd, Haugen, Anderson, & Spriggs, 2002).

Another case against recess was that in some schools, recess time was needed for study hall because of state requirements for instructional time (Gardner, 1995). The usual 30-minute recess was vulnerable as principals fit study time in the school day. During the study time, students worked on addition skill work books or practiced the skills currently being taught in the classroom. For example, the state of Georgia had implemented new requirements for instructional time. Gardner stated that there were not enough hours in the school year for recess and 900 hours of instructional time. Gardner noted that although some schools continue to schedule recess to meet child development needs and to increase positive classroom behavior, other schools forced students to eat lunch quickly and then immediately rush outside for supervised free time.

Another reason recess had lost its place in the school day was an economic issue. In researching recess, Tyler (2000) found that some schools were eliminating recess because of various reasons, including budget cuts. Some new schools were being built without playgrounds and some school districts offered recess to kindergarteners and first

graders only. In cost benefit analysis, educators and school boards had many pressing priorities. New building and classroom needs, including technology, placed the need for playground equipment in the hands of the parent-teacher association. The costs of playground space and the expense of liability were considerations in cost benefit analyses.

Towers (1997) reported a review of literature on the lack of playtime on school playgrounds. Towers found that school playgrounds were one of the few remaining environments where children could play independently. Busier roads and parents' fear of children being attacked had reduced the opportunities for independent play on the playgrounds. Towers discovered the five main reasons for the lack of playtime on the playground related to students' behaviors: aggression (needlessly aggressive), desultory behavior (low level play), traditional games (declining), problems for certain groups (specific concerns), and lunchtime (behavior problems).

#### *Recess Policies in 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

Although Ramsburg (1998) stated that there was a trend on "no recess" policies being implemented in United States, school districts in places such as Atlanta, New York, Chicago, New Jersey, and Connecticut other states were implementing recess policies (American Association for the Child's Right to Play [AAFTCRTP], 2004). Michigan policy stated that teachers were mandated to have recess and administrators were required to monitor their teachers. Teachers offered daily recess periods or periods of physical activity for all elementary and middle school students. According to AAFTCRTP, recess was a key component to creating an effective learning environment. The Virginia Board of Education adopted a recess policy that required that elementary schools provided

students with daily recess during the regular school year as determined appropriate by the school. According to the North Carolina State Board of Education Policy Manual [NCSBOEPM], 2004, North Carolina state board of education had a recess policy: structured recess and other physical activity shall not be taken away as a form of punishment, appropriate amounts of recess and physical activity should be provided for students, and physical activity required by this section involved physical exertion of at least a moderate intensity level and for duration sufficient to provide a significant health benefit to students (NCSBOEPM). South Carolina Governor's Council on physical fitness stated that all schools should offer convenient opportunities for students and staff to participate in enjoyable physical activity, and this imperative should be embodied in policy. Recess was an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary aged children. According to South Carolina, recess should be a reward and not used as punishment. Recess was critical for children's current and future health (South Carolina Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, 2004).

There were several organizations that supported recess policies throughout the US. The National Association of Early Childhood Specialist in State Departments of Education took the position that recess was an essential component of education and that preschool and elementary school children had the opportunity to participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers (Children Need Recess [CNR], 2004). The National Association for Sport and Physical Education concluded that recess should be separated from physical education as an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary aged children (CNR, 2004). The National Association of Elementary Schools Principals recognized recess as an important component in a child's

physical and social development. NAESP encouraged principals to develop and maintain appropriately supervised free play for children during the school day (CNR, 2004). The National Association for the Education of Young Children stated that school administrators should implement recess in their curriculum (CNR, 2004).

The National Association of State Boards of Education encouraged a policy to enhance physical activity (Policies to Encourage Physical Activity [PTEPA], 2004). School leaders should develop and implement a plan to encourage time in the elementary school day for supervised recess. Schools had a responsibility to help students maintain a practice of physical activity. Regular physical activity was important to maintain and improve their physical health, mental health, and overall well-being. Physical activity enhanced students' ability for learning. Physical activity helped students stay alert and attentive in class, and provided other educational and social benefits. School authorities should encourage and develop schedules that provided time within every school to enjoy supervised recess. Every school should have had a playground, other facilities and equipment for free play (PTEPA).

#### Status of Recess in Georgia

In 2003, House Bill 1013 was written and introduced to the House by concerned teachers, parents and researchers to ensure Georgia middle and elementary school students receive daily scheduled breaks ([www.legis.state.ga.us](http://www.legis.state.ga.us)). General Assembly found, determined, and declared House Bill 1013: that virtually no middle schools in Georgia allowed students to have a scheduled break or recess during the day; growing number of elementary schools in Georgia no longer had daily recess; children became progressively inattentive when deprived of a significant break or recess; periodic mental

breaks had been shown to improve memory; research had shown that children, especially those with attention deficit disorder, were more on-task and less fidgety after a break or recess; research showed that children were active 59 percent of the time during recess; children who were inactive in school also tended to be inactive after school; in the 20 years since some Georgia school systems abolished recess in elementary school, the rate of childhood obesity had doubled. One in four children in America was obese, increasing the risks of high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and Type II diabetes. Low activity was considered a cause of obesity; while several studies suggested that test scores either stayed same or slightly increased when a break was provided, there was no research that supported that providing breaks lower tests scores; and it was appropriate for daily scheduled breaks to come from an already mandated instructional hours. Federal labor regulations stated that breaks' promoted the efficiency of the employees and were customarily paid for as working time. They were counted as hours worked. Each local board of education should have scheduled time for all students in kindergarten and grades one through eight a daily recess period consisting of at least 15 minutes of supervised, unstructured activity time, preferably outdoors. Recess should not have been withheld from a student as discipline. For the purposes of Code Section 20\_2\_290, this chapter, and by this Code section should have been considered as academic instruction. Local boards of education should have established policies to ensure that recess was a safe experience for students and that recess was scheduled so that it provided a break during academic learning ([www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)).

In April 2004, Governor Sonny Perdue supported House Bill 1190, which was included as House Amendment 20-2-323 (Georgia General Assembly, 2004). House Bill

1190 passed in 2004 by the state of Georgia legislation stated that each local board of education in Georgia may have established written policies on the provision of unstructured daily break for students K-8 consisting of at least 15 minutes of supervised, unstructured activity time, preferably outdoors. The break allowed by this Code section shall be considered as academic instruction, but the break shall not be part of the Quality Core Curriculum and shall not be subject to requirements for the Quality Core Curriculum. The break shall not be replacement for physical education or structured physical activity. Local boards of education may have established policies to ensure that the break is a safe experience for students, that recess is scheduled so that it provides a break during academic learning, and that recess is not used as reward or punishment on a regular basis. Local boards were required to create by January 1, 2005, a policy that either allows or prohibits an unstructured break time for students grades K-8.

House Bill 1190 became law in 2004 in Georgia. This bill led to the creation of procedures to be implemented in all local school districts by January 2005. In the Cobb County school district, Mark Anderson, Supervisor, Health & Physical Education; Dr. Will Rumbaugh, Director, Elementary Curriculum and Instruction; and Terry Poor, Director, Middle School Curriculum and Instruction wrote the Cobb County School District provision regarding “recess” in 2003-2004 school year in response to a change in state law. They included the provision in Administrative Rule (Preservation of Instructional Time), which was available in the on-line Manual of Administrative Rules and Forms. The section on recess reads as follow: C. Unstructured Break Time (Recess) in Grades K-8.

1. Grades K-5: In accordance with Georgia Code each elementary school principal, with input from grade level teachers, the Director of Elementary Curriculum, and their Area Assistant Superintendent, should determine if unstructured breaks were to be held. If the determination was made to hold unstructured break time, the elementary school principal should establish guidelines that: define length, frequency, timing and location of breaks for students; state whether or not breaks could be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons, and the conditions under which such breaks could be withheld; ensure break time was well supervised and safe; and ensure that each student received maximum instructional time to support increased student achievement.
2. Grade 6-8: Middle school students were required to have 300 minutes in the academic block of classes. Additionally, middle school students participated in connections classes and the middle school health and physical education program. Middle school students had unstructured, supervised, scheduled break time from instruction during class changes. Additional unstructured break time is not authorized at the middle school level.

The new law in Georgia provided the principal with the power, along with a team, to decide the status of recess as “unstructured break time.” For example, one elementary



school principal in Cobb County examined the new law and then formed a team to address the recess issue. At Bullard Elementary, the principal met with the grade level teachers to establish how to implement recess policy. Using the guidelines from the Cobb County local board, Bullard Elementary decided to provide unstructured, free play recess for grades kindergarten to fifth a minimal of fifteen minutes. They also decided that teachers could be allowed to sit students out for a few minutes for discipline in the classroom, but not the entire recess break.

### *Principal's Role in Implementing Recess*

In developing policies that govern recess, many educators possessed one of the two views, identified by Towers in 1997. The two views related to playground behavior were romantic view and problematic view. Towers explained that romantic view of playtime was illustrated the positive associations and the benefits of recess. This view indicated that children learned and enjoyed recess through games and positive interactions. The problematic view of playtime focused on eliminating recess from the school day. This view demonstrated the problems associated with recess, such as bullying and disruptive behavior (difficult behavior), gender issues (girls are perceived as disadvantaged), playground environment (unstimulating children's play), and new school entrants in the playground (new students or new play area) (Towers, 1997).

How educators perceived recess, either the romantic view or problematic view, influenced the existence of and duration of recess in the school day. Newman, Brody, and Beauchamp (1996) directed a study to observe teacher's attitudes and policies regarding play in elementary schools. The researchers reported that the amount of recess provided by the teachers was an overall mean of 18.65 minutes. Teachers in rural areas

provided more recess than teachers in suburban areas, who in turn provided more recess than teachers in urban areas. Teachers who had positive attitudes towards recess provided more recess time for students. Upper grade levels de-emphasized the value and role of play because of the academic instruction time. Children who were given less recess time had teachers who had negative attitudes about recess (Newman, Brody, & Beauchamp, 1996).

School administrators who worked with teachers to develop the school's master schedule dealt with the placement of physical education and recess in the school day. There was much variation in scheduling recess, as far as the number of recess periods and the time provided to children each day (Jarret, 2002). The environment that was suitable for recess may have been limited in some schools. Typically, recess occurred outdoors in a designated play area; however, depending on the weather, schools may have had recess in a game room, gym, or in a classroom. Traditionally, school leaders included recess in the school day. In the 1980s, 90% of school districts had some form of recess (Clements & Jarrett, 2000; Lindsay, 1994). Since that date and with the increased pressure to improve academic achievement, increased test scores, and cover the curriculum, school districts had either modified, deleted, or were considering deleting recess from the daily schedule (Ramsburg, 1998).

### Summary

Recess was a break period for children when they could interact with their peers without adult supervision. In reviewing recess as part of the school day, this researcher noted advantages and disadvantages that were reported from several studies. Advantages of free play included the opportunity for academic development and learning. Children

who were given a time for recess had less stress, made choices, planned, and expanded their creativity. Children were able to have a mental change and release energy. When returning to the classroom, children's attention turned more towards academic tasks and behavior was minimized. Recess was an important element in classroom management and behavior guidance. Children could practice social skills during recess in a real-world experience unlike the classroom setting. Students were allowed to enhance the three developmentally domains of physical, social, and academic. Recess offered children the opportunity to "blow off steam" known as the surplus energy theory. Children returned to the classroom to pay attention, were less fidgety, and stay focused.

The researcher's primary purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. This study consisted of several areas of purpose. First, the researcher examined the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals. The researcher's second purpose was to report the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school. The researcher's third analyzed the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher's fourth and final purpose was to ascertain if the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess. The methodology was described in Chapter 3. In chapter three, the researcher focused on research methodology by presenting: research questions, research design, sample of population, instrument, data collection, and data analysis.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Recess was a break from the tasks at hand that gave children a chance to use their imagination, make free choices, and be active. Students were able to interact with peers, play games that they choose to play, and made their own choice about the activity that they wanted to participate (Gardner, 1995, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). Historically, recess had been included as part of the school day. However, more recently recess had been eliminated in some schools for various reasons: demands of school accountability; placing more importance on testing students to meet state, local, and national standards; increase in instructional time; budget cuts; fear of being liable for students' injuries on the playground, and shortage of adult supervision (Gardner, 1995, Goodale & Warner, 1998; Tyler, 2000).

The researcher's primary purpose of this study was to obtain the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher's descriptive study consisted of several areas of purpose. First, the researcher examined the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals. The researcher's second purpose was to report the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school. The researcher's third analyzed the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher's fourth and final purpose was to ascertain if the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess.

In this chapter, the researcher focused on research methodology by presenting: research questions, research design, population, instrument, data collection, and data analysis.

### Research Questions

The following overarching question governed the research: What are the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools? In order to answer the overarching question, the following sub-questions guided the research:

1. What are the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals?
2. What are the considerations of principals in developing recess time in their school?
3. What are the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools?
4. Do principal's demographics make any difference in their perceptions of school recess?

### Research Design

The researcher conducted a descriptive study to ascertain the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools, the recess practices perceived by principals, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time, and the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess.

A descriptive study allowed for a frame of reference, just not the reporting of results (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). It helped describe the process of recess as it

related to perceptions of principals regarding recess. A descriptive study involved the collection of data in order to answer questions concerning the present position of the sample in the study. This type of research helped to avoid the drawing of faulty conclusions by using a technique that questions what things were like, not why they were that way (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The who, what, when, where and how of a situation was studied, not what had caused it to be this way (de Vaus; 1998; McMillan & Schumacher).

Descriptive study involved the collection of data in order to answer questions concerning the present position of the population in the study. It provided the number of times something occurs or lends itself to statistical calculations such as determining the average number of occurrences. In a descriptive study, the researcher stated the question to be answered in the study, defined the subjects, developed an instrument, constructed the questionnaire, prepared a cover letter, and lastly prepared a description and analysis of results received (de Vaus, 1996).

### Population

The population for the study consisted of principals in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher examined the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher obtained the list of elementary principals from the state department of education's website ([www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)). The population for the study consisted of all of the principals in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher used random sampling to determine 500 principals of the 1,200 population of Georgia elementary principals to be involved in the study.

Random sampling obtained participants from a population in an unbiased way. A biased sample could overvalue or undervalue a population variable. In a random sample, all participants had the same opportunity of being selected (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The researcher chose every 3<sup>rd</sup> principal in each county as long as the county at least had three principals. The size of the district determined how many principal(s) were randomly selected from each county so that every school district in Georgia was represented by proportion of size.

#### Instrument

The researcher developed a Likert-scale survey instrument to examine the perceptions of principals regarding recess, their recess practices, their considerations in developing recess, their guidelines of implementing recess time, and their demographic information. Kerlinger and Lee (2000) stated that a Likert scale was a summated rating scale with a set of attitude items that were at equal value and each participant responded with degrees of agreement or disagreement. The survey had 40 items with five sections. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) stated that a researcher utilized a survey to collect data on a population to describe, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and other types of information. The researcher developed a survey to obtain information from a large number of people (population) that can be gathered from the responses of a smaller group of subjects (sample). Surveys described demographics; explored relationships or reasons for a particular practice (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 1993). The first section of the instrument contained questions designed to determine principals' perceptions regarding recess. The second section allowed the principals to indicate what recess practices they used in their school. The third section asked what considerations

principals used when developing recess in their school. The fourth section asked the principals their guidelines of implementing recess time in their school. Section five concentrated on demographic information which obtained personal and profession information about the principals who responded to the survey, such as gender, racial/ethnic origin, level of degree, number of students in their school, and years of experience of the principals. The survey items consisted of the research questions (see Table 3).

The researcher selected items for the survey by examining the research on recess, policy, and principals to develop an instrument. The researcher developed items to accumulate information on recess. The instrument consisted of several major topics: perceptions of principals regarding recess in their school, recess practices used in their school, the considerations used in developing recess time, their guidelines of implementing recess time, and their demographic information. A cover letter was sent with the survey. It introduced the researcher, asked for the



Table 3

Table of Analysis

Survey Items	Literature	Research Questions Attempting to Answer
1. Recess reduces stress so learning can occur appropriately.	Gardner (1995); Tyler (2000)	Major research question
2. Recess increases the likelihood of school site injuries.	Goodale & Warner (1998); Tyler 2000	Major research question
3. Children release energy during recess.	Nelson & Smith (1995); Towers (1997); Pellegrini (1995)	Major research question
4. Recess is an essential component of the total education experience.	Gardner (1995); Tyler (2000)	Major research question
5. Recess helps students place attention on academics.	Bodrova & Leong (2003); Jarret (2002); Jarret, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson (1998); Pellegrini & Smith (1993); Shaffer (2001); Tyler (2000); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay (2001)	Major research question
6. Recess is an important element in classroom management and behavior guidance.	Kieff (2001); Leff, Costigan & Power (2002); Lindsay (1994); Mulrine (2000); Pellegrini & Smith (1993); Ramsburg (1998); Schwartz & Kirkpatrick (2001); Strom (1981); Todd, Haugen, Anderson & Spriggs (2002); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay	Major research question

7. Recess enhances physical development.	(2001) Gardner (1995); Jarret (2002); Jenson (1998); Juelsgaard (1996); MacLachlan (1998); NAECSSDE (2001); O'Brien (1998); Shaffer (2001); Tutelian (2001); Tyler (2000); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay (2001)	Major research question
8. Recess is viewed as an off-task behavior.	Kraft (1989); Pellegrini & Glickman (1989); Scruggs, Beveridge & Watson (2003)	Major research question
9. Recess is messy, noisy, and unstructured activity time.	Kraft (1989); Pellegrini & Glickman (1989); Scruggs, Beveridge & Watson (2003)	Major research question
10. Students can learn how to socialize with peers through recess.	Bishop & Curtis (2001); Butcher (1999); Clements & Jarret (2000); Jarret (2002); MacLachlan (1998); O'Brien (1998); Pellegrini & Glickman (1989); Perry & Bussey (1984); Strom (1971, 1978, 1981); Thompson, Knudson, & Wilson (1997); Tutelian (2001); Tyler (2000)	Major research question
11. Children can choose, plan, and expand their creativity during recess.	Gardner (1995); Pellegrini (1995); Shaffer (2001); Tyler (2000)	Sub question #1
12. All grade levels, Kindergarten	American Association for	Sub question #1

through fifth, have a daily scheduled recess.	the Child's Right to Play (2004);	
13. Children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess.	Gardner (1995); O'Brien (1998); Tutelian (2001); Tyler (2000)	Sub question #1
14. Recess is scheduled separately from physical education.	MacLachlan (1998); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay (2001)	Sub question #1
15. Recess is scheduled for teachers and students to follow.	Newman, Brody, & Beauchamp (1996); Todd, Haugen, Anderson & Spriggs (2002); Towers (1997)	Sub question #1
16. Recess should be supervised, unstructured activity time.	MacLachlan (1998); Shaffer (2001); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay (2001)	Sub question #1
17. Increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time.	Gardner (1995); Jarret, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson (1998); Ramsburg (1998); Shaffer (2001); Tyler (2000)	Sub question #2
18. State and local budget cuts.	Gardner (1995); Tyler (2000)	Sub question #2
19. Frequency of recess.	Clements & Jarret (2000); Jarret (2002); Lindsay (1994); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay (2001)	Sub question #2
20. Location of recess.	Goodale & Warner (1998) Blatchford (1998); Gardner (1995)	Sub question #2
21. Length of recess.	Todd, Haugen, Anderson & Spriggs (2002); Towers	Sub question #2
22. Developing student rules in recess.		

	(1997)	
23. Age of the students.	Jarret, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson (1998);	Sub question #2
24. Attention span.	Pellegrini & Smith (1993) Jarret, Maxwell & Dickerson (1998); Pellegrini & Smith (1993); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay (2001)	Sub question #2
25. Instructional time.	Gardner (1995); Jarret, MacLachlan (1998); Jarret, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson (1998); Pellegrini & Smith (1993); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay (2001)	Sub question #2
26. Appropriate supervision.	Lewis, Colvin & Sugai (2000)	Sub question #2
27. Appropriate supervision of activities in recess is needed.	Lewis, Colvin & Sugai (2000)	Sub question #3
28. Teachers should be assigned specific responsibilities in recess.	Newman, Brody, & Beauchamp (1996); Todd, Haugen, Anderson & Spriggs (2002)	Sub question #3
29. A safe environment should be provided at recess location.	Goodale & Warner (1998)	Sub question #3
30. Student rules in recess should be strictly implemented.	Todd, Haugen, Anderson & Spriggs (2002); Towers (1997)	Sub question #3
31. Timing of recess should be closely monitored.	Todd, Haugen, Anderson & Spriggs (2002)	Sub question #3

32. Recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons.	Jarret (2002); Pellegrini & Smith (1993); Shaffer (2001); Tyler (2000); Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay (2001)	Sub question #3
33. Gender		Sub question #4
34. Number of students in your school	No existing research	Sub question #4
35. Racial/Ethnic origin	No existing research	Sub question #4
36. Years of experience as a principal	No existing research	Sub question #4
37. Highest degree earned	No existing research	Sub question #4
38. School location		Sub question #4
39. Percentage of your students that participate in the free or reduced lunch program	No existing research	Sub question #4
40. Percentage of minority in your school	No existing research	Sub question #4

principals' assistance, explained to the principals that their responses are held confidential, completion and returning the questionnaire gave the researcher permission to use the survey, and thank the principal in advance for participating.

Kerlinger and Lee (2000) stated that content validity was the representation or sample adequacy of the content (matter, substance, and topic) of the measuring instrument. Content validity was addressed by making certain the items on the instrument measured recess; the researcher studied the literature (Butcher, 1999; Gardner, 1995; Goodale & Warner, 1998; Jarrett, Hoge, Davies, Maxwell, Yetley, & Dickerson, 1998; Nelson, 1995) to create the items. Wording was used from the literature to help ensure consistency with other researchers' views on recess.

First, the researcher submitted the instrument to ten elementary principals to establish the concept of validity. A cover letter and survey was sent via email. The researcher asked the principals to make recommendations of any adjustments that needed to be made to the instrument. The ten elementary principals made suggestions on how the researcher could improve the survey. The researcher took these ideas from the principals and made necessary changes.

Next, the researcher sent the instrument to another set of ten elementary principals to obtain the data to analyze the concept of reliability. They completed a draft of the instrument by reviewing the items and providing feedback for modification. Gay (1996) stated that pre-testing an instrument generated data concerning survey imperfections as well as ideas for enhancement. Data collected at pilot study was tested for internal reliability.

The researcher mailed out a postcard to each principal as a follow-up reminder after one week of the mailing the survey to increase potential response rate. Huck (2000) stated that researchers should mail more than one survey or indicator about the survey to have a higher response rate. Researchers who did not follow up on their inquiries tended to have had a low response rate (Huck). Kerlinger and Lee (2000) stated that researchers should expect a response rate of 50 percent. Return rates of less than 40 percent were most common and higher percentage rates were rare. Researchers should be content with participation rates from 40 to 50 percent (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000). Based on the population size of 500, the researcher determined that if 175 surveys were returned that would be acceptable to the researcher of this study.

#### Data Collection

This study was a descriptive study that employed a quantitative method to collect and analyze data. After Institutional Review Board approval from Georgia Southern University, the researcher mailed surveys with cover letters to 500 participants to obtain data for the study. The participants were principals who were asked to respond to a two-page, Likert-scaled survey with 40 questions. When completing the instrument, the principals indicated their level of agreement with each of the criteria statements regarding recess by circling 4 to 1 on a Likert scale. The numbers represented the following: 4- strongly agree, 3- agree, 2- disagree, or 1- strongly disagree. The survey was mailed on March 3, 2006. The principals completed and returned in the envelope provided. After one week of the initial mail out, the researcher mailed out a postcard to each principal as a follow-up reminder. The postcards were mailed on March 10, 2006.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative approaches were used to analyze data for this research study.

Kerlinger and Lee (2000) stated that quantitative research was used to generalize the concepts and hypotheses tested to gain credibility by obtaining a better link to the real world. The data collected was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (1999)-program version 11.0 by descriptive statistics (Cronk, 1999). In using descriptive statistics, the researcher used central tendency measures to find the mean (average or typical response) (de Vaus, 1996) and find the standard deviation (the square root of the variance) (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000) in parts one through four. The aim in this study was to describe principals' perceptions regarding recess. The data from part five was analyzed by analysis of variance to examine the demographic differences in the principals' perceptions.

### Summary

The researcher's overall focus in the study was recess and the perceptions of Georgia principals regarding recess in Georgia school districts. The researcher examined: the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools, the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools, and to ascertain if the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess.

The researcher mailed questionnaires to 500 elementary school principals in Georgia in March 3, 2006. After one week of the initial mail out, the researcher mailed out a post card to each principal as a reminder on March 10, 2006. The researcher



received 210 questionnaires. To compute the data, quantitative approaches were used to analyze data for this research study. The data collected was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (1999)-program version 11.0 by descriptive statistics. The researcher used central tendency measures to find the mean and the standard deviation in parts one through four of the survey. The aim in this study was to describe principals' perceptions regarding recess. The data from part five was analyzed by analysis of variance to examine the demographic differences in the principals' perceptions.

The researcher explained the report of data and data analysis in Chapter 4. In chapter 4, the researcher concentrated on explaining a quantitative, descriptive study by reporting the findings.

## CHAPTER IV

### REPORT OF DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

The researcher conducted a quantitative, descriptive study to obtain the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher designed a survey. Quantitative data were obtained through the A Survey of Principals' Perceptions Regarding Recess in Georgia Elementary Schools.

The researcher's findings from this study of quantitative data analysis were summarized below. The data from the survey was organized as follows: in part 1, the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools were reported by analysis of mean and standard deviation along with a table that listed the mean and standard deviation. In part 2, the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals were reported by analysis of mean and standard deviation along with a table that listed the mean and standard deviation. In part 3, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school were reported by analysis of mean and standard deviation along with a table that listed the mean and standard deviation. In part 4, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools was reported by analysis of mean and standard deviation along with a table that listed the mean and standard deviation. In part 5, whether principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess was reported by analysis of variance along with a table that listed the analysis of variance. The researcher's quantitative findings were reported in narrative form, and tables were used to report the statistics. Quantitative data analysis was accomplished utilizing the computer program Statistical Package for

the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 11.0. Analyses generated frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviations for the items on the survey.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were examined in this study.

What are the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools?

Additionally, sub questions were proposed to isolate specially determine specific questions in regards to the overarching question.

1. What are the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals?
2. What are the considerations of principals in developing recess time in their school?
3. What are the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools?
4. Do principal's demographics make any difference in their perceptions of school recess?

### Research Design

The researcher developed a survey to determine the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools, the recess practices perceived by principals, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time, and whether principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess. Likert scale was developed to determine the principal's level of agreement with each of the criteria

statements regarding recess. When completing the survey, principals circled 4 to 1 on a Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement. The numbers represented: 4- strongly agree, 3- agree, 2- disagree, or 1- strongly disagree. To test for validity, the researcher submitted the survey to ten elementary principals. A cover letter and survey was sent via email. The researcher asked the principals to make recommendations of any adjustments that needed to be made to the survey. The ten elementary principals made suggestions on how the researcher could improve the survey. As a result, the survey was revised based on results from concept of validity testing. The researcher as a result of feedback made revisions.

The researcher sent the cover letter and survey to another set of ten elementary principals to obtain the data to analyze the concept of reliability. The researcher used SPSS 11.0 to test for internal consistency. The results of the test indicated reliability coefficients were expectable as a good instrument for survey. Most principals answered the same way.

### Respondents

The subjects surveyed in this study were principals from 500 Georgia Elementary schools. The researcher examined the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. Principals were the best individuals to study because they made schedules and dealt with the operations of the appointed school. Principals were responsible for policies and procedures in the elementary school setting. The population for the study consisted of 500 principals in Georgia elementary schools. The researcher used random sampling to determine which 500 principals to select out of the 1,200 population of Georgia elementary principals. The researcher chose every 3<sup>rd</sup> principal in

each county. The size of the district determined how many principal(s) were randomly selected from each county so that every school district in Georgia was represented by proportion of size. The researcher obtained the list of elementary principals from the state department of education's website ([www.doe.k12.ga.us](http://www.doe.k12.ga.us)).

The researcher mailed surveys to 500 principals in Georgia elementary schools after the approval of the doctoral committee and the institutional review board (IRB). A cover letter, survey, and self-addressed stamped envelope were placed in envelopes and mailed to each principal. There was a 42% return percentage rate. Forty-two percent of the sample responded during the 2005-2006 school academic school year. Two hundred and ten principals out of five hundred principals completed and returned the survey in the envelope provided. After one week of the initial mail out, the researcher mailed out a postcard to each principal as a follow-up reminder. Kerlinger and Lee (2000) stated that researchers should expect a response rate of 50 percent. Return rates of less than 40 percent were most common and higher percentage rates were rare. Researchers should be content with participation rates from 40 to 50 percent.

## Findings

### *Principals' Overall Perceptions Regarding Recess*

The principals' general perceptions of recess in their schools were analyzed and reported by descriptive statistics. The researcher's data revealed that principals had a slightly above average positive attitude regarding recess. General perceptions included principals' responses to recess practices, recess considerations, and guidelines of implementing recess. Principals in general had a slightly above average positive attitude. The above average mean was 2.9066 out of a 4-point Likert Scale with a standard deviation of .39141 (see Table 4).

### *Principals' Perceptions Regarding Recess Practices*

In analyzing the principals' responses to recess practices, 7 practices were examined. As a result of data analysis, practice 1 (children can choose, plan, and expand their creativity during recess) had a 55.2 percent of agreement from school principals, and 27.1 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 82.3. Practice 2 (all grade levels, kindergarten through fifth, have a daily scheduled recess) had a 25.2 percent of agreement from school principals, and 47.1 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 72.3. Practice 3 (children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess) had a 42.4 percent of agreement from school principals, and 43.3 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 85.7. Practice 4 (recess is scheduled separately from physical education) had a 31.4 percent of agreement from school principals, and 55.2 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 86.6. Practice 5 (there is a specific recess schedule that

teachers and students must follow) had a 32.9 percent of agreement from school principals, and 33.8 of strong agreement

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics- Principals' General Perception of Recess

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Principals' Perceptions	198	1.50	4.00	2.9066	.39141

from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 66.7. Practice 6 (recess should be supervised, unstructured activity time) had a 41.4 percent of agreement from school principals, and 41 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 82.4. Practice 7 (increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time) had a 36.2 percent of agreement from school principals, and 26.7 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 62.9. Recess Practice 3 (children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess) and Recess Practice 4 (recess is scheduled separately from physical education) were agreed by school principals (85.7% on Practice 3 and 86.6% on Practice 4) to be the recess practices they mostly employ. Practice 7 (increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time) was identified by school principals (62.9%) to be the least that they would employ (see Table 5).

*Principals' Perceptions Regarding Recess Considerations*

In analyzing the principals' responses to recess considerations, 9 recess considerations were involved. As a result of data analysis, consideration 1 (state and local budget cuts) had a 16.2 percent of agreement from school principals, and 9 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 25.2.

Table 5

Percentages- Principals' Perceptions of agreeable recess practices

<u>Practices</u>	<u>Agreeable Percent</u>	<u>Strongly Agreeable Percent</u>	<u>Total Agreeable Percent</u>
1. Children can choose, plan, and expand their creativity during recess.	55.2	27.1	82.3
2. All grade levels, kindergarten through fifth, have a daily scheduled recess.	25.2	47.1	72.3
3. Children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess.	42.4	43.3	85.7
4. Recess is scheduled separately from physical education.	31.4	55.2	86.6
5. There is a specific recess schedule that teachers and students must follow.	32.9	33.8	66.7
6. Recess should be supervised, unstructured activity time.	41.4	41.0	82.4
7. Increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time.	36.2	26.7	62.9



Consideration 2 (frequency of recess) had a 55.2 percent of agreement from school principals, and 17.6 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 72.8. Consideration 3 (location of recess) had a 49.5 percent of agreement from school principals, and 19 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 68.5. Consideration 4 (length of recess) had a 51 percent of agreement from school principals, and 31.4 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 82.4. Consideration 5 (developing student rules in recess) had a 50.5 percent of agreement from school principals, and 25.7 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 76.2.

Consideration 6 (age of the students) had a 47.6 percent of agreement from school principals, and 20 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 67.6. Consideration 7 (attention span) had a 40.5 percent of agreement from school principals, and 14.3 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 54.8. Consideration 8 (instructional time) had a 38.6 percent of agreement from school principals, and 46.2 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 84.8. Consideration 9 (appropriate supervision) had a 24.3 percent of agreement from school principals, and 62.9 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 87.2. Consideration 4 (length of recess), Consideration 8 (instructional time) and Consideration 9 (appropriate supervision) were the three items most considered by principals (82.4% on Consideration 4, 84.8% on Consideration 8, and 87.2% on Consideration 9) in their development of recess time. Consideration 1 (state and local budget cuts) no doubt was identified by

school principals (25.2%) to be the item they would least consider in developing recess time (see Table 6).

*Principals' Perceptions Regarding Recess Guidelines of Implementing Recess*

In analyzing principals' responses to the guidelines of implementing recess, 6 guidelines were included in the analysis. As a result of data analysis, implementation guideline 1 (appropriate supervision of activities in recess is needed) had a 10.5 percent of agreement from school principals, and 78.1 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 88.6. Implementation guideline 2 (teachers should be assigned specific responsibilities in recess) had a 39.5 percent of agreement from school principals, and 41.4 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 80.9. Implementation guideline 3 (a safe environment should be provided at recess location) had an 11 percent of agreement from school principals, and 80.5 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 91.5. Implementation guideline 4 (student rules in recess should be strictly implemented) had a 29.5 percent of agreement from school principals, and 59 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 88.5. Implementation guideline 5 (timing of recess should be closely monitored) had a 36.7 percent of agreement from school principals, and 50 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 86.7. Implementation guideline 6 (recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons) had a 47.6 percent of agreement from school principals, and 32.9 of strong agreement from school principals with a total percentage of agreement of 80.5. The strongest agreement recommended by school principals appeared to be implementation guideline 3. All of the

implementation guidelines indicated high total percentages of agreement. All principals agreed that the 6 implementation guidelines were most frequently used with the strongest focus being on number 3 (a safe environment should be provided at recess location) in implementing recess time. Implementation Guideline 3 was agreed by principals as number 1 concern. The weakest agreement from the principals was Implementation Guideline 6. Even though Implementation Guideline 6 received a lower agreement percentage rate of the other guidelines, it was still often used by school principals as guidelines for implementing recess time (see Table7).

Table 6

Percentages- Principals' Perceptions of Considerations of Developing Recess Time

Considerations		Agreeable Percent	Strongly Agreeable Percent	Total Agreeable Percent
1.	State and budget cuts	16.2	9.0	25.2
2.	Frequency of recess	55.2	17.6	72.8
3.	Location of recess	49.5	19.0	68.5
4.	Length of recess	51.0	31.4	82.4
5.	Developing students rules in recess	50.5	25.7	76.2
6.	Age of the students	47.6	20.0	67.6
7.	Attention span	40.5	14.3	54.8
8.	Instructional time	38.6	46.2	84.8
9.	Appropriate supervision	24.3	62.9	87.2

### *Demographics*

The four different areas of principals' perceptions: general perceptions, practices, considerations, and implementation were analyzed to determine demographics including gender, race, level of experience and degree level made any differences in responses to these four areas.

#### Gender

As a result of data analysis, there was no significant difference between male or female with general perceptions, practices, or the way they look at considerations. However, there was a significant difference in the way male and female looked at guidelines for implementations ( $F$  value = 6.163). The significant level of .014 was highly significant (see Table 8). To determine the positive views of male and female principals on guidelines of implementing

Table 7

#### Percentages- Principals' Perceptions of guidelines for implementing recess time

Implementation Guidelines	Agreeable Percent	Strongly Agreeable Percent	Total Agreeable Percent
1. Appropriate supervision of activities in recess is needed.	10.5	78.1	88.6
2. Teachers should be assigned specific responsibilities in recess.	39.5	41.4	80.9
3. A safe environment should be provided at recess location.	11.0	80.5	91.5
4. Student rules in recess should be strictly implemented.	29.5	59.0	88.5
5. Timing of recess should be closely monitored.	36.7	50.0	86.7
6. Recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons.	47.6	32.9	80.5

Table 8

ANOVA- Gender Differences in Principals' Perceptions

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Significant
Principals' Perceptions	Between Groups	.124	1	.124	.850	.358
	Within Groups	27.568	189	.146		
	Total	27.692	190			
Practices	Between Groups	.111	1	.111	.272	.603
	Within Groups	78.627	193	.407		
	Total	78.738	194			
Considerations	Between Groups	1.110	1	1.110	3.258	.073
	Within Groups	63.695	187	.341		
	Total	64.804	188			
Implement	Between Groups	1.919	1	1.919	6.163*	.014
	Within Groups	60.727	195	.311		
	Total	62.647	196			

\*p&lt;.05

recess time, the researcher conducted data analysis through descriptive statistics to find out the perception means of male and female principals. The mean of the female principals was 3.597 out of 4-point scale, and the mean of the male principals was 3.3939. There was a significant difference between mean scores of male and female principals. Female principals have a more positive perception in the guidelines of implementing recess time than male principals (see Table 9).

Race

Table 10 reports the comparison of race (mainly between African Americans and Caucasians) to determine if race made a difference with responses to the four areas of principals' perceptions, practices, considerations, and implementation. There were no

significant differences in considerations and implementation among the races. However, there was a significant difference in principals' general perceptions and practices. The significant difference among races in principals' general perceptions was .004. The significant difference in practices was .001 (see Table 10). To determine whether African Americans or Caucasians had a more positive view on principals' perceptions and practices, the researcher conducted data analysis through descriptive statistics to find out the perception means of the racial groups. African Americans had a mean of 2.7468 out of a 4-point scale, and Caucasians had a mean of 2.9806 with principals' perceptions. African Americans had a mean of 2.9016 out of a 4-point scale, and Caucasians had a mean of 3.3207 with practices. There was a significant difference between African Americans and Caucasians in principals' perception mean scores. Caucasians had a more positive attitude in principals' perceptions and practices (see Table 11).

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics- Gender Differences in Principals' Perceptions-Implementation

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Female	134	1.00	4.00	3.5970	.52119
Male	66	1.33	4.00	3.3939	.64293
Valid N (listwise)	57				

Table 10

ANOVA- Race Difference in Principals' Perceptions and Practices

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Squares	F	Significant
Principals' Perceptions	Between Groups	1.936	3	.645	4.659**	.004
	Within Groups	25.620	185	.138		
	Total	27.555	188			
Practices	Between Groups	6.432	3	2.144	5.753**	.001
	Within Groups	69.685	187	.373		
	Total	76.117	190			
Considerations	Between Groups	2.196	3	.732	2.143	.096
	Within Groups	61.826	181	.342		
	Total	64.022	184			
Implement	Between Groups	.612	3	.204	.620	.603
	Within Groups	62.174	189	.329		
	Total	62.786	192			

\*\*p<.01.

Level of Experience and Degree Level

ANOVA was performed to analysis principals' degree level and experience level to determine if any differences existed in principals' responses regarding perceptions of recess time. No significant difference was found.

Response to Research Questions

The data from the 210 surveys were compiled and entered into SPSS 11.0 and calculated to determine how principals answered the research questions of the study. The data was reported from the survey of the findings to answer research questions of the study. Significant findings for the study were listed. The overarching question of the

study was: What are the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools?

From the data analysis, the researcher revealed that perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools had an above average positive attitude. The above average mean was 2.9066 out of a 4-point Likert Scale with a standard deviation of .39141. Principals had a positive attitude regarding general perceptions, which included: principals' responses to recess practices, recess considerations, and guidelines of implementing recess.

1. What are the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals?

In analyzing the principals' responses to recess practices, seven practices were examined. From the data analysis, the researcher revealed that when adding the percentage of agreement from school principals and the percentage of strong agreement from the principals in all seven practices, recess practices were perceived by principals at a 62% or higher total percentage of agreement. The single most important components were Recess Practice 3 (children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess) and Recess Practice 4 (recess is scheduled separately from physical education) agreed by school principals (85.7% on Practice 3 and 86.6% on Practice 4) to be the recess practices they mostly utilize. Practice 7 (increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time) was identified by school principals (62.9%) to be the least that they would utilize.



Table 11

Descriptive Statistics- Race Differences in Principal Perceptions and Practice

		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Perceptions	African	47	1.90	3.40	2.7468	.34632
	American					
	Caucasian	139	1.90	4.00	2.9806	.37934
	Valid N (listwise)	45				
Practices	African	45	1.29	4.0	2.9016	.68905
	American					
	Caucasian	143	1.29	4.0	3.3207	.56820
	Valid N (listwise)	44				

2. What are the considerations of principals in developing recess time in their school?

In analyzing the principals' responses to recess considerations, nine recess considerations were involved. From the data analysis, the researcher revealed that when adding the percentage of agreement from school principals and the percentage of strong agreement from the principals in all nine considerations, recess considerations were perceived by principals at a 54% or higher total percentage of agreement, except one consideration. Consideration 1 was the only consideration below 54 total percentage of agreement. Consideration 1 (state and local budget cuts) was at a 25.2% total percentage of agreement. Principals agreed with 8 of the considerations at a 54% or higher total percentage of agreement. The components mostly considered by principals were

Consideration 4 (length of recess), Consideration 8 (instructional time), and Consideration 9 (appropriate supervision) in their development of recess time (82.4% on Consideration 4, 84.8% on Consideration 8, and 87.2% on Consideration 9 respectively). Consideration 1 (state and local budget cuts) was identified by school principals (25.2%) to be the item they would least consider in developing recess time.

3. What are the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools?

In analyzing principals' responses to the guidelines of implementing recess, six guidelines were included in the analysis. From the data analysis, the researcher revealed that when adding the percentage of agreement from school principals and the percentage of strong agreement from the principals in all six guidelines, recess guidelines were perceived by principals at an 80% or higher total percentage of agreement. The strongest agreement recommended by school principals appeared to be implementation guideline 3 (a safe environment should be provided at recess location). All of the implementation guidelines indicated high total percentages of agreement. All principals agreed that the six implementation guidelines were most frequently used with the strongest focus being on number 3 (a safe environment should be provided at recess location) in implementing recess time. Implementation Guideline 3 was agreed by principals as number 1 concern. The weakest agreement from the principals was Implementation Guideline 6 (recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons). Even though Implementation Guideline 6 received a lower agreement percentage rate of the other guidelines, it was still often used by school principals as guidelines for implementing recess time.

4. Do principal's demographics make any difference in their perceptions of school recess?

Four different areas of principals' perceptions were analyzed to establish demographics (gender, race, and level of experience made any differences in this study), such as: general perceptions, practices, considerations, and implementation.

In regards to gender, the researcher revealed that there was no significant difference between male or female with general perceptions, practices, or the way they look at considerations. However, there was a significant difference in the way male and female looked at guidelines for implementations ( $F$  value = 6.163). The significant level of .014 was highly significant. To determine the positive views of male and female principals on guidelines of implementing recess time, the researcher conducted data analysis through descriptive statistics to find out the perception means of male and female principals. The mean of the female principals was 3.597 out of 4-point scale, and the mean of the male principals was 3.3939. There was a significant difference between mean scores of male and female principals. Female principals had a more positive perception in the guidelines of implementing recess time than male principals.

In regards to race (mainly between African Americans and Caucasians), the researcher confirmed that there were no significant differences in considerations and implementation among the races in the four areas of principals' perceptions, practices, considerations, and implementation. However, there was a significant difference in principals' general perceptions and practices. The significant difference among races in principals' general perceptions was .004. The significant difference in practices was .001. To determine whether African Americans or Caucasians had a more positive view

on principals' perceptions and practices, the researcher conducted data analysis through descriptive statistics to find out the perception means of the racial groups. African Americans had a mean of 2.7468 out of a 4-point scale, and Caucasians had a mean of 2.9806 with principals' perceptions. African Americans had a mean of 2.9016 out of a 4-point scale, and Caucasians had a mean of 3.3207 with practices. There was a significant difference between African Americans and Caucasians in principals' perception mean scores. Caucasians had a more positive attitude in principals' perceptions and practices.

In analyzing the level of experience and degree level, an ANOVA was performed to analysis principals' degree level and experience level to determine if any differences exist in principals' responses regarding perceptions of recess time. The researcher illustrated no significant difference was found.

### Summary

The researcher presented data findings and data analysis by observing perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. The method used in this research project was quantitative. The quantitative data was collected through the use of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was mailed to 500 principals in Georgia elementary schools for the 2005- 2006 school year. Data collection was done in March 2006. Two hundred and ten questionnaires were mailed back from principals. From the analysis of the quantitative data, it was found that in part 1 (perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools), principals had an above average positive attitude concerning recess. Principals had a positive attitude regarding general perceptions, which included: principals' responses to recess practices, recess considerations, and guidelines of implementing recess. In part 2, the recess practices

used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals were analyzed by seven practices. The researcher revealed that principals had a 62% or higher total percentage of agreement rating. The single most important components were Recess Practice 3 (children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess) and Recess Practice 4 (recess is scheduled separately from physical education) that were agreed upon by school principals (85.7% on Practice 3 and 86.6% on Practice 4) to be the recess practices they mostly utilized. Practice 7 (increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time) was identified by school principals (62.9%) to be the least that they would utilize. In part 3, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school were analyzed by nine recess considerations. The researcher revealed that principals had a 54% or higher total percentage of agreement rating, except one consideration. Consideration 1 was the only consideration below 54 total percentage of agreement, which was at a 25.2% total percentage of agreement. Principals agreed with 8 of the considerations at a 54% or higher total percentage of agreement. The components that were mostly considered by principals were Consideration 4 (length of recess), Consideration 8 (instructional time), and Consideration 9 (appropriate supervision) in their development of recess time (82.4% on Consideration 4, 84.8% on Consideration 8, and 87.2% on Consideration 9 respectively). In part 4, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools were analyzed by six guidelines. The findings from the data analysis revealed that principals had an 80% or higher total percentage of agreement rating. The strongest agreement recommended by school principals appeared to be implementation guideline 3. All of the implementation guidelines indicated high total percentages of agreement. All

principals agreed that the six implementation guidelines were most frequently used with the strongest focus being on number 3 (a safe environment should be provided at recess location) which implemented recess time. Principals agreed Implementation Guideline 3 as number 1 concern. The weakest agreement from the principals was Implementation Guideline 6. Even though Implementation Guideline 6 received a lower agreement percentage rate of the other guidelines, school principals still often used it as guidelines to implement recess time. In part 5, whether principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess was reported by four different areas of principals' perceptions: general perceptions, practices, considerations, and implementation.

In regards to gender, the researcher revealed that there was no significant difference between male or female with general perceptions, practices, or the way they look at considerations. However, there was a significant difference in the way male and female looked at guidelines for implementations. To determine the positive views of male and female principals on guidelines of implementing recess time, the researcher conducted data analysis through descriptive statistics to find out the perception means of male and female principals. There was a significant difference between mean scores of male and female principals. Female principals had a more positive perception in the guidelines of implementing recess time than male principals.

In regards to race (mainly between African Americans and Caucasians), the researcher confirmed that there were no significant differences in considerations and implementation among the races in the four areas of principals' perceptions, practices, considerations, and implementation. However, there was a significant difference in

principals' general perceptions and practices. The researcher conducted data analysis through descriptive statistics to find out the perception means to determine whether African Americans or Caucasians had a more positive view on principals' perceptions and practices. There was a significant difference between African Americans and Caucasians in principals' perception mean scores. Caucasians had a more positive attitude in principals' perceptions and practices.

In analyzing the level of experience and degree level, the researcher indicated no significant difference was found in principals' responses regarding perceptions of recess time. The researcher discussed the summary, conclusions, and implications of the findings of this study in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

In this chapter, the researcher presented a summary, research questions, findings, discussion of findings, conclusions, implications, recommendations, and concluding thoughts. This chapter was organized by the researcher to include an overview of the study and a discussion of how the research findings related to the research in the review of the literature.

#### Summary

The researcher's purpose of this study was to determine perceptions of Georgia elementary principals regarding recess. Specifically, the researcher's objective was to identify these perceptions to secure information that might be useful to superintendents, curriculum directors, principals, local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and other decision makers who were responsible for designing the school day.

Recess had been eliminated in some schools because more time was needed for instruction in an attempt to raise standardized test scores. Traditionally, recess was included in the school day to enhance skills, such as physical ability, active talk with peers, and free play.

The educational reform of standards and accountability were developed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), which resulted in educators across the country reexamining their practices, procedures, and daily schedules. Educators looked for ways to create the perceived need for additional instructional time to teach the curriculum standards. Some principals adjusted the school schedule to eliminate or significantly reduce the amount of time students had for recess.



However, recess was the time in the school day that had the potential to influence the child's academic development, physical development, and social development, as well as the child's emotional needs. The time for recess in the school day not only contributed to the child's cognitive and intellectual needs, but also allowed cultural exchange between children.

Principals' perceptions of recess was important because principals were the authorities with power to influence the structure of the school day. Principals implemented policy through the development of procedures, which may have influenced by a principal's values, beliefs, and perceptions. The researcher's findings illustrated to superintendents, curriculum directors, principals, local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and other decision makers principals' perceptions as they implemented recess in their schools.

The researcher developed a survey to collect information on the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools, the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools, and to ascertain if the principal's demographics made any difference in their perceptions of school recess.

Quantitative data were collected from participants' responses to the A Survey of Principals' Perceptions Regarding Recess in Georgia Elementary Schools. The questionnaire was included in Appendix C. The questionnaire was mailed to 500 principals in Georgia elementary schools. One week after the initial mail out, the researcher sent a post card as a reminder to return the survey. Two hundred and ten

questionnaires were returned from the principals in the study. Descriptive statistics were generated by SPSS 11.0 to determine the findings of the study.

### Research Questions

The researcher developed the following research questions for this study. The over arching question was: What are the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools?

Additionally, sub questions were proposed to answer the overarching question:

1. What are the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals?
2. What are the considerations of principals in developing recess time in their school?
3. What are the principals' guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools?
4. Do principals' demographics make any difference in their perceptions of school recess?

### Findings

In the overarching question, the researcher proposed to examine the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools. Principals perceived recess positively in Georgia elementary schools with an above average level of agreement.

In sub-question 1, seven recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals were analyzed by the researcher. The researcher's findings revealed that principals had a 62% or higher total percentage of agreement rating. The single most important components were Recess Practice 3 (children participate in regular

periods of active, free play with peers at recess) and Recess Practice 4 (recess is scheduled separately from physical education) which were agreed upon by school principals (85.7% on Practice 3 and 86.6% on Practice 4) to be the recess practices they mostly utilized. Practice 7 (increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time) was identified by school principals (62.9%) to be the least that they would utilized.

In sub-question 2, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school were analyzed by nine recess considerations. The researcher's findings from the data analysis revealed that principals had a 54% or higher total percentage of agreement rating, except one consideration. Consideration 1 (state and local budget cuts) was the only consideration below 54 total percentage of agreement. Consideration 1 was at a 25.2% total percentage of agreement. Principals agreed with 8 of the considerations at a 54% or higher total percentage of agreement. The most important components that were mostly considered by principals were Consideration 4 (length of recess), Consideration 8 (instructional time), and Consideration 9 (appropriate supervision) in their development of recess time (82.4% on Consideration 4, 84.8% on Consideration 8, and 87.2% on Consideration 9 respectively).

In sub-question 3, the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools were analyzed by six guidelines. The researcher's findings revealed that principals had an 80% or higher total percentage of agreement rating. All of the implementation guidelines indicated high total percentages of agreement. All principals agreed that the six implementation guidelines were frequently used with the strongest focus being on number 3 (a safe environment should be provided at recess

location). Principals agreed that Implementation Guideline 3 was number 1 concern based on 91.5% agreement. The weakest agreement from the principals was Implementation Guideline 6 (Recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons). Even though Implementation Guideline 6 received a lower agreement percentage rate (80.5%) of the other guidelines, school principals still often used guideline 6 as a guideline to implement recess time.

In sub-question 4, the researcher examined four demographics of respondents to determine differences. The researcher studied general perceptions, practices, considerations, and implementation in regards to principals' gender, race, and level of experience.

In regards to gender, the researcher's findings revealed that there were no significant difference between male or female with general perceptions, practices, or the way they looked at considerations. However, there was a significant difference in the way male and female looked at guidelines for implementations. To determine the level of agreement of male and female principals on guidelines of implementing recess time, the researcher conducted data analysis through descriptive statistics to find out the perception means of male and female principals. There was a significant difference between mean scores of male and female principals. Female principals overall had a higher level of agreement in the guidelines of implementing recess time than male principals.

Regarding race (African Americans and Caucasians), the findings from the data analysis confirmed that there were no significant differences in considerations and implementation among the races in the four areas of principals' perceptions, perceptions

of practices, perceptions of considerations, and perceptions of implementation. However, there was a significant difference in principals' general perceptions and practices. There was a significant difference between African Americans and Caucasians in principals' perception mean scores. Caucasians had a higher level of agreement in principals' general perceptions and practices. No significant difference was found in principals' responses considering level of experience and degree level.

### Discussion of Findings

In the literature concerning recess, there was a void in the literature that addressed principals' perceptions of recess in elementary schools, the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals, the considerations of principals in developing recess time at their school, and the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools. There was no research that dealt with how recess was being implemented in Georgia schools or the perceptions of principals making such decisions. The perceptions of 210 principals were analyzed in this study.

#### *Discussion of Overarching Question*

Overarching question: What are the perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools?

In this study, the researcher's findings confirmed that principals in Georgia elementary schools generally perceive recess as beneficial to students in their schools. The researcher's analysis revealed that principals agreed that recess reduced stress, was an essential component of the total education experience, and helped students place attention on academics. Responding principals agreed that recess was also an important element in classroom management and behavior guidance, enhanced physical

development, and that children released energy during recess. Students learned how to socialize with peers and developmental domains were enhanced. However, principals agreed that accountability was a factor in determining the length of time for recess in the school day.

The researcher revealed that recess was a developmentally appropriate outlet for reducing stress in children, and recess was also an important element of classroom management and behavior (Kieff, 2001). Recess contributed to the academic, social, and physical development of a child because recess was one of the few places that all of the developmental domains were positively enhanced (Gardner, 1995; Kieff, 2001; Lindsay, 1994; Mulrine, 2000; Ramsburg, 1998; Schwartz & Kirkpatrick; 2001, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). Researcher showed play was very important in the brain development of children, in academic, health, physical, and language development, in addition to their social and emotional adjustments and in their classroom behavior (Strom, 1981; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001).

Moreover, recess was the time in the school day for the concept of play to influence the child's academic and social development, as well as the child's emotional needs. This time in the school day not only contributed to the child's cognitive and intellectual needs, but also allowed cultural exchange where children associated with children of different cultures. This break in the day was an important part of the day for students to be physically active, to talk with their peers, and to play freely (O'Brien, 1998; Tutelian, 2001). The importance of this time in a child's development allowed recess in school to be viewed as a necessary part of the school day. School principals had

been advised not to use recess as a reward, taken away as a means of punishment, or used as a time to make up work (Gardner, 1995).

Butcher (1999), Thompson and Wilson (1997), Pellegrini and Glickman (1989), and Jarret (2002) suggested that recess was a time when students learned many social skills and promoted social development while on the playground. The release of energy allowed the child to acquire and maintain the ability to focus on learning and the knowledge of social skills allowed a child to play a productive part in society (Bishop & Curtis, 2001). In this study, the researcher found that principals agreed that recess was important in the school day. The researcher's findings supported the findings of Butcher; 1999, Gardner, 1995; Jarret, 2002; Kieff, 2001; Lindsay, 1994; Mulrine, 2000; Pellegrini and Glickman, 1989; Ramsburg, 1998; Schwartz and Kirkpatrick; 2001, Shaffer, 2001; Strom, 1981; Thompson and Wilson, 1997; Tyler, 2000, and Waite-Stupiansky and Findlay, 2001. In this study, the researcher found that recess reduced stress. Kieff (2001) found that recess reduces stress. In this study, the researcher found that recess was an essential component of the total education experience and academic development. Recess contributed to the academic, social, and physical development of a child because recess was one of the few places that all of the developmental domains were positively enhanced (Gardner, 1995; Kieff, 2001; Lindsay, 1994; Mulrine, 2000; Ramsburg, 1998; Schwartz & Kirkpatrick; 2001, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000).

#### *Discussion of Sub-question 1*

What are the recess practices used in Georgia elementary schools as perceived by principals?

There were seven practices that the respondents were asked to identify as practices that they would employ in their school. The researcher's findings confirmed that all of the recess practices were being employed at a 62% or higher total percentage rate in Georgia elementary schools. The seven recess practices were: children can choose, plan, and expand their creativity during recess, all grade levels, kindergarten through fifth, have a daily scheduled recess, children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess, recess is scheduled separately from physical education, there is a specific recess schedule that teachers and students must follow, recess should be supervised, unstructured activity time, and increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time.

The principals most utilized that students should have regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess and that recess be scheduled separately from physical education. Practice 7 was least employed by principals out of all the practices. Even though practice 7 was least employed, principals had a 62.9% agreement percentage rate that they would employ practice 7 (increased accountability had reduced recess time). Principals agreed that increased accountability did influence the time of recess in their schools. Principals were eliminating or deleting recess to increase instructional time to raise test scores.

The researcher disclosed that recess constituted a break in the day set aside to allow children the time for active, free play (Gardner, 1995). Recess was a time when students played freely, made their own choices, used their imaginations, and expanded their creativity (Kieff, 2001; Tyler, 2000). Unstructured play gave children the opportunity to exercise their sense of wonder, thus, leading to exploration, followed by use of creativity (MacLachlan, 1998; Shaffer, 2001; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001). The National Association of Early Childhood Specialist in State Departments of



Education took the position that recess was an essential component of education and that preschool and elementary school children had the opportunity to participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers (Children Need Recess [CNR], 2004). In this study, the researcher found that the principals in Georgia agreed that students should have time for recess. Practice 3 (children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess) was employed by responding Georgia elementary principals with an 85.7% rate of agreement. The researcher's findings from this study supported the findings of Gardner, 1995; Kieff, 2001; MacLachlan, 1998; Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000; and Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001. In this study, the researcher found that students should have regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess and that recess be scheduled separately from physical education. MacLachlan; 1998, Shaffer, 2001; Waite-Stupiansky & Findlay, 2001 were researchers that agreed with this study that students should have regular periods of active, free play.

The researcher also disclosed that Gardner, 1995; Jarret, Maxwell, and Dickerson, 1998; MacLachlan, 1998; Pellegrini and Smith, 1993; Shaffer, 2001; Waite-Stupiansky and Findlay, 2001 supported Practice 4 (recess is scheduled separately from physical education). MacLachlan (1998) found that recess was not the same as structured physical education. Recess was an unstructured time where students made up their own rules. Physical education through movement was an instructional program that gave attention to all learning domains: psychomotor, cognitive, and affective. Physical education was a structured, planned curriculum that had established goals (Gardner, 1995; Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). The National Association for Sport and Physical Education articulated that physical education (an instructional program that relates to

physical activity and performance) could not take the place of recess (Children Need Recess [CNR], 2004).

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education also supported Practice 4 that recess should be separated from physical education as an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary aged children (CNR, 2004). The National Association of Elementary Schools Principals recognized recess as an important component in a child's physical and social development. NAESP encouraged principals to develop and maintain appropriately supervised free play for children during the school day (CNR, 2004). The National Association for the Education of Young Children stated that school administrators should implement recess in their curriculum (CNR, 2004). In this study, the researcher found that the responding principals in Georgia agreed that recess should be scheduled separately from physical education. In this study, Practice 4 (recess is scheduled separately from physical education) was utilized by responding Georgia elementary principals with an 86.6% rate of agreement.

In this study, Practice 7 was least utilized by principals out of all the practices. Responding principals in Georgia elementary schools agreed that increased accountability did influence the time of recess in their schools with a 62.9% agreement percentage rate. In the review of literature, the researcher found that The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) added increased accountability to local schools by requiring district administrators to implement challenging standards in reading and mathematics. Standardized testing and accountability for all students' growth and success forced administrators in schools to think about changing recess time to instructional time in the school day (Gardner, 1995, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). Legislators required more instructional requirements, hence, lead administrators to exclude

recess from the school day. The pressures to improve test scores encouraged districts to make changes in the instructional day and in curriculum (Gardner, 1995, Shaffer, 2001; Tyler, 2000). According to Gardner (1995), some schools developed recess into a 30-minute study time for those schools that were required to set aside at least 900 hours a year for teaching learning activities. Gardner (1995) stated that there were not enough hours in the school year for recess and 900 hours of instructional time. The researcher's findings from this study and the findings of Gardner, 1995; Shaffer, 2001; and Tyler, 2000 supported added increased accountability to local schools by requiring district administrators to implement challenging standards in reading and mathematics. Standardized testing and accountability for all students' growth and success forced administrators in schools to think about changing recess time to instructional time in the school day

#### *Discussion of Sub-question 2*

What are the considerations of principals in developing recess time in their school?

There were nine considerations that the principals were asked to identify as considerations they used in developing recess time in their school. The researcher's findings of this study confirmed that all considerations were being utilized at a 54% or higher total percentage of agreement rating, except one consideration. Consideration 1 (state and local budget cuts) was the only consideration below 54 total percentage of agreement. Consideration 1 was at a 25.2% total percentage of agreement. The nine considerations were: state and local budget cuts, frequency of recess, location of recess, length of recess, developing student rules in recess, age of the students, attention span, instructional time, and appropriate supervision. Principal most considered amount of

instructional time, appropriate supervision and safety of students; and length of recess when developing recess time. The consideration that principals least considered when developing recess was local, state, and budget cuts. Again, the length of time for recess was found to be a major consideration of the elementary principals. In the literature, Tyler (2000) found that some schools were being built without playgrounds because of budget cuts. The findings from this study did not support the findings of Tyler (2000). In this study, local, state, and budget cuts were the least considered when principals implemented recess in the school day.

In this study, Consideration 4 (length of recess) was considered by principals with an 82.4% rate of agreement. The researcher disclosed that research from Pellegrini (1995) indicated that length and frequency of recess related to playground activity helped children to be successful in maintaining appropriate attention span during their instruction time. Findings for the duration of recess in schools related to playground activities were proportional to the improvement in attention span and classroom behavior. Blatchford (1989) administered a national survey that studied four aspects of recess, including duration, supervision, pupil behavior, perceived value and problems. The findings indicated that behavior and attention span improved with recess. The results of the perceived value of recess and problems showed that students had time to relax, socialize, break from class activities, and release energy (Blatchford, 1989). The researcher's findings from this study supported the finds of Blatchford, 1989 and Pellegrini, 1995 that length and frequency of recess related to playground activity helped children to be successful in maintaining appropriate attention span during their instruction time.

In the review of literature, the researcher disclosed that Leff, Costigan, and Power (2002) supported Consideration 8 (instructional time). Leff, Costigan, and Power (2002) performed a study to observe the behaviors and skills used at recess to observe if instructional focus was improved. The researchers reported the percentages of the time skills implemented as follows: cooperative play (56.9%), rough and tumble play (17.5%), and intercultural interactions (47.7%). Recess positively enhanced temperament and instructional focus (Pellegrini, 1995). In this study, the researcher found that the responding principals considered instructional time when implementing recess. The researcher's findings from the study supported the findings from Leff, Costigan, and Power (2002) that instructional focused was improved through recess.

In this study, Consideration 5 (developing student rules in recess) was considered by principals with a 76.2% rate of agreement, and Consideration 9 (appropriate supervision) was considered by principals with a 87.2% rate of agreement. As reported in the review of literature, Todd, Haugen, Anderson, and Spriggs (2002) conducted a school wide study that observed behaviors on the playground to see how the behaviors were positively influenced by teachers who stressed recess expectations, had appropriate supervision and routines prior to recess. The researchers indicated that the intervention reduced the number of behavioral incidences, improved the overall school climate, and increased staff satisfaction. The intervention process made the playground a safe and respectful environment that allowed free play, recess without the negative behavior; which, in turn became a part of the day that students and staff enjoyed (Todd, Haugen, Anderson, & Spriggs, 2002). The researcher's findings from this study supported the

findings of Todd, Haugen, Anderson, & Spriggs, 2002 that teachers should establish playground rules for students.

In this study, Consideration 5 (developing student rules in recess) was considered by responding principals in Georgia elementary schools with a 76.2% rate of agreement. Lewis, Colvin, and Sugai (2000) studied elementary students to determine if developing student rules would reduce the rate of observed behavior problems through enhancing social development. The three strategies were: teaching effective social skills, teaching playground rules, and active supervision. The researchers indicated simple involvement in teaching social behavior, active supervision, and reviewing rules did reduced students' problem behaviors. The researcher's findings from this study supported the findings of Lewis, Colvin, and Sugai (2000) concerning Consideration 5 (developing student rules in recess).

In this study, Consideration 7 (attention span) was considered by principals with a 54.8% rate of agreement. Jarrett (2002) showed that students who were allowed recess were less fidgety; stayed focused on their tasks, and remembered more when there were breaks in their day. In a Canadian study involving more than 500 school children, those who spent an extra hour everyday in a gym class far outperformed at exam time than those who did not exercise. Jensen revealed that among three test groups, the one that had the aerobic exercise improved short term memory, reaction time, and creativity. When physical education time was increased by one-third of the school day, academic scores went up (Jensen, 1998). Jarret (2002) found research in French and Canadian schools over a period of four years showed positive effects of time spent in physical activity. The results of spending one-third of the school day in formal and less formal

physical education, in art, and in music were increased fitness, improved attitudes, and slight improvements in test scores. These results were consistent with the findings of a meta-analysis of nearly 200 studies on the effect of exercise on cognitive functioning that suggested that physical activity supported learning (Jarret, 2002). The researcher's findings from this study supported the findings of Jarret (2002) and Jenson (1998) concerning Consideration 7 (attention span) that students were less fidgety; stayed focused on their tasks, and remembered more when there were breaks in their day.

### *Discussion of Sub-question 3*

What are the principal's guidelines of implementing recess time in Georgia elementary schools?

There were six guidelines that the principals were asked to identify as guidelines they used for implementing recess time in their school. The researcher's findings of this study confirmed that all of the recess guidelines were being utilized at an 80% or higher total percentage of agreement rating. The six guidelines were: appropriate supervision of activities in recess is needed, teachers should be assigned specific responsibilities in recess, a safe environment should be provided at recess location, student rules in recess should be strictly implemented, timing of recess should be closely monitored, and recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons. The strongest guideline in implementing recess time was safe environment provided at location. Principals revealed in this study that they were very concerned about appropriate supervision and safety as agreed upon in considerations in developing recess and guidelines for implementing recess time.

In this study, Implementation Guideline 3 (a safe environment should be provided at recess location) was implemented by responding principals with a 91.5% rate of agreement. Blatchford (1989) conducted a study that divided supervision into three groups: teaching staff, support staff, and ancillary staff. Blatchford found that supervision was spread more thinly at the secondary level than elementary level. In this study, the researcher found that responding principals implemented guideline 3 in implementing recess time in their school. The researcher's findings from this study supported the findings of Blatchford (1989).

In this study, Implementation Guideline 6 (recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons) was implemented by responding principals with an 80.5% rate of agreement. Implementation Guideline 6 received a lower agreement percentage rate (80.5%) than the other guidelines. School principals still used guideline 6. In the review of literature, the researcher disclosed that North Carolina state board of education had a recess policy: structured recess and other physical activity shall not be taken away as a form of punishment, appropriate amounts of recess and physical activity should be provided for students, and physical activity required by this section involved physical exertion of at least a moderate intensity level and for duration sufficient to provide a significant health benefit to students (NCSBOEPM). South Carolina Governor's Council on physical fitness stated that all schools should offer convenient opportunities for students and staff to participate in enjoyable physical activity, and this imperative should be embodied in policy. Recess was an essential component of the total educational experience for elementary aged children. According to South Carolina, recess should be a reward and not used as punishment (South Carolina Governor's



Council on Physical Fitness, 2004). In this study, the researcher found that responding principals implemented guideline 6 in implementing recess time in their school. The researcher's findings from this study supported the findings of North Carolina State Board of Education Policy Manual [NCSBOEPM], 2004 and South Carolina Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, 2004.

In this study, Implementation Guideline 1 (appropriate supervision of activities in recess is needed) was implemented by principals with a 88.6% rate of agreement. In the review of literature, the researcher revealed that Michigan policy stated that teachers were mandated to have recess and administrators were required to monitor their teachers (American Association for the Child's Right to Play [AAFTCRTP], 2004). Teachers offered daily recess periods or periods of physical activity for all elementary and middle school students. According to AAFTCRTP, recess was a key component to creating an effective learning environment. The Virginia Board of Education adopted a recess policy that required that elementary schools provided students with daily recess during the regular school year as determined appropriate by the school. The researcher's findings from this study supported the findings of American Association for the Child's Right to Play [AAFTCRTP], 2004.

In this study, Implementation Guideline 1 (appropriate supervision of activities in recess is needed) was implemented by principals with an 88.6% rate of agreement. In the review of literature, the researcher disclosed the National Association of State Boards of Education encouraged a policy to enhance physical activity (Policies to Encourage Physical Activity [PTEPA], 2004). School leaders should develop and implement a plan to encourage time in the elementary school day for supervised recess. Schools had a

responsibility to help students maintain a practice of physical activity. Physical activity enhanced students' ability for learning. Physical activity helped students stay alert and attentive in class, and provided other educational and social benefits. School authorities should encourage and develop schedules that provided time within every school to enjoy supervised recess. Every school should have had a playground, other facilities and equipment for free play (PTEPA). The researcher's findings from this study supported the findings of Policies to Encourage Physical Activity [PTEPA], 2004 that students should be supervised during recess.

#### *Discussion of Sub-question 4*

Do principal's demographics make any difference in their perceptions of school recess?

The researcher revealed the demographics analysis with regards to gender, there was no difference in the way male principals or female principals looked at general perceptions, practices, or considerations. Female principals agreed to a greater extent that the guidelines of implementing recess time were important to them than male principals overall. In regards to race (mainly between African Americans and Caucasians), there were no differences in their considerations and used in establishing recess and their implementation of recess. However, there was a significant difference in principals' general perceptions of recess and the practices. Caucasians had a higher level of agreement towards principals' general perceptions of recess and practices.

### Conclusion of Findings

An analysis from the results of the study indicated the following conclusions:

1. Principals reported that recess should be scheduled separate from physical education.
2. Principals were concerned about appropriate supervision of activities in recess and a safe environment should be provided at recess.
3. Outside forces (standards and accountability) impact recess more than curriculum decisions.
4. Principals value recess because of help for students but were concerned about the loss of instruction time.

### Implications

Principals viewed recess as an important component of the school day. Although accountability and standards dominate the structure of the school day elementary principals recognized the importance of recess. Therefore, the following implications were offered:

1. Superintendents should examine recess policy and how elementary principals were implementing recess in their school.
2. Local school boards should examine recess policy.
3. Curriculum directors should conduct an examination of the recess policy to determine how recess should be incorporated in the school day for students.
4. Principals should examine the importance of recess and how recess could be incorporated into the school day to benefit their students.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings and insights of the implications identified in this study, the researcher made the following recommendations for participants and others:

1. Superintendents, curriculum directors, principals, local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, and other decision makers should recognize by examining research on recess or recess policy that recess reduced stress, was an essential component of the total education experience, helped students place attention on academics, was an important element in classroom management and behavior guidance, enhanced physical development, allowed children to release energy during recess, and students learned how to socialize with peers.
2. Principals should be encouraged to use these recess practices in their elementary school: children should participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess, and recess should be scheduled separately from physical education, children could choose, plan, and expand their creativity during recess; all grade levels, kindergarten through fifth, should have a daily scheduled recess; there should be a specific recess schedule that teachers and students must follow; and recess should be supervised, unstructured activity time.
3. Principals should be encouraged to use these considerations when developing recess time in their school: length of recess, instructional time, appropriate supervision, frequency of recess, location of recess, developing students' rules in recess, age of students, and attention span.

4. Principals should be encouraged to use these guidelines of implementing recess time in their elementary school: appropriate supervision of activities in recess was needed, teachers should be assigned specific responsibilities in recess, a safe environment should be provided at recess location, student rules in recess should be strictly implemented, timing of recess should be closely monitored, and recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons.
5. Professors at the university level should use research data found in this study to instruct future educators on the issue of recess and developing recess policy in their future school.
6. Principals should have included recess in the school day.

The following recommendations were offered for further research:

1. Future researchers should replicate the quantitative study in the 2006- 2007 school year to determine changes in perceptions of principals regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools.
2. Future researchers should use a qualitative research study to interview superintendents regarding policy and planning in order to determine the process taken when implementing the new state law regarding recess.
3. Future researchers should conduct a qualitative research study to provide additional information and insight through interviews with principals.
4. Future researchers should conduct a study to determine teachers' perceptions regarding recess in Georgia elementary schools.

### Concluding Thoughts

Our students were tomorrow's society and work force. Children are no longer allowed to be inquisitive, young children with the ability to learn skills to compete in today's world in some schools through recess. Recess was important to enhance the three developmental domains of learning: academic development, physical development, and social development. Recess enhanced skills, such as problem solving, communication, and team work. Recess allowed a child to release energy to maintain the ability to focus in the classroom.

The researcher is a teacher who reduced the amount of recess her students received to add more instructional time to the daily schedule. Then, she started reviewing literature to determine if this plan was in the best interest of the students. In reading the literature, the researcher learned that students' developmental needs should be the foundation for every choice made concerning their education. The researcher now believes that those developmental domains must remain at the center of decisions about school organization, policies, scheduling, and everyday practices.

The researcher conducted a study on how policy regarding recess is implemented, developed or established and the criteria for making such decisions. This research can contribute to the body of knowledge on recess by adding information regarding recess in Georgia schools because it may help some policy makers realize the importance of having or not having recess.

The findings of this study are important because of the increasing concern for recess being eliminated in the school day. Findings from this study may show curriculum directors, superintendents, districts, local school boards, administrators, teachers, and

parents the extent to which policy influences recess. The results of this study may also help school districts in Georgia learn about the strategies that other school districts and/or curriculum directors use to make decisions about implementation and scheduling of recess. Through this study, curriculum directors may gain information on the implementation of policy(s) concerning recess and its value to schools.

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## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL CORRESPONDENCE

Georgia Southern University  
Office of Research Services & Sponsored Programs

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

Phone: 912-681-5465

Administrative Annex

Fax: 912-681-0719

Ovrsight@GeorgiaSouthern.edu

P.O. Box 8005

Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Lori Morrison  
808 Spring Heights Lane  
Smyrna, GA 30080

**cc:** Dr. Barbara Mallory, Faculty Advisor  
P. O. Box 8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

**Date:** January 11, 2006

**Subject:** Receipt of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

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Your Institutional Review Board Application titled **"Principals' Perceptions Regarding Recess In Georgia Elementary Schools"** was received by our office on **"January 9, 2006"**. Your protocol number is **"H06112"**. Please refer to this number when contacting the office. Your application has been sent to an IRB sub-committee reviewer. This review will determine the type of review to be performed (Exempt, Expedited, or Full-Board).

If your protocol is deemed to fall into the exempt or expedited category, the reviewer will either approve, or make recommendations for revisions. Recommendations for revisions will be sent to you as soon as they are received. You may revise your protocol in keeping with the recommended changes and resubmit to the IRB upon completion of those revisions necessary for approval.

If it is determined that your protocol must be reviewed by the full Board, you will be notified of the time and the date of the Board meeting. You have the option of attending the meeting to present your protocol in person and answer Board questions. Decisions of the Board will be communicated following the meeting. You may check on the status of your IRB application at: <http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/research/IRB.htm>

For additional information regarding the different types of review, please visit our website at: <http://academics.georgiasouthern.edu/research/IRB.htm>

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Statesboro, GA 30460

**To:** Lori Morrison  
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**cc:** Dr. Barbara Mallory, Faculty Advisor  
P. O. Box 8131

**From:** Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Support Office for Research Oversight Committees  
(IACUC/IBC/IRB)

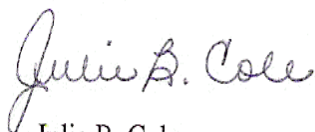
**Date:** January 17, 2006

**Subject:** Status of Application for Approval to Utilize Human Subjects in Research

After a review of your proposed research project numbered: H06112, and titled "Principals' Perceptions Regarding Recess in Georgia Elementary School", it appears that your research involves activities that do not require approval by the Institutional Review Board according to federal guidelines.

*Therefore, as authorized in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, I am pleased to notify you that your research is exempt from IRB approval. You may proceed with the proposed research.*

Sincerely,



Julie B. Cole

Director of Research Services and Sponsored Programs

APPENDIX B  
COVER LETTER



Georgia Southern University

Department of Leadership, Technology and Human Development

Dear Principal:

My name is Lori Morrison, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. I am a Kindergarten teacher at Bullard Elementary School in Cobb County. To complete my dissertation, I am conducting a survey to determine the principals' perceptions regarding recess in Georgia Elementary Schools. The information could be used by educators to learn strategies of other school districts and/or principals to make decisions about the scheduling of recess. The desire would be to provide insight for superintendents, districts, local school boards, principals, and teachers regarding recess.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering data on principals' perceptions regarding recess. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached questionnaire and place in the addressed envelope provided. Do not write your name or any identifying mark on the survey. Completion and return of the questionnaire will indicate permission to use the information you provide in the study. Please be assured that your responses will be held confidential. There will be no identifying marks on envelopes. While it is possible that the completed demographics section of the survey could be linked to identifying a participant, no attempt by the researcher will be made to do so. The data from this section will be reported in ranges and grouped. Information from the remainder of the questionnaire will in a summary form and will not be reported individually by district so most information will be blinded. The study will be most useful if you respond to every item in the questionnaire; however, if you chose not to respond to every item, your questionnaire can be used in the study. The data gathered from this study will be included in my dissertation which will be on public file.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project, please call me, Lori Morrison, at 904-556-8494, or you can contact me at [lorimmorrison@yahoo.com](mailto:lorimmorrison@yahoo.com). You may also contact my academic advisor, Dr. Barbara Mallory, at 912-681-5307 or [bmallory@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:bmallory@georgiasouthern.edu). Should you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, I encourage you to contact the IRB coordinator at The Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-5465.

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in studying this important question. I realize you are very busy this time of the year and assure you this should take no more than ten minutes of your time. The results should provide districts in Georgia with valuable information concerning the implementation of recess in Georgia elementary schools. Please respond by Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully,

Lori Morrison

APPENDIX C  
SURVEY

### A Survey of Principals' Perceptions Regarding Recess in Georgia Elementary Schools

Directions: Please circle the degree to which you agree with the statements related to recess. To answer the following questions, please circle 4 to 1.

1 = Strongly Disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Agree    4 = Strongly Agree

#### Part I. What are your perceptions regarding recess in your school?

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  | Recess reduces stress so learning can occur appropriately.                    | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2.  | Recess increases the likelihood of school site injuries.                      | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3.  | Children release energy during recess.  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4.  | Recess is an essential component of the total education experience.           | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5.  | Recess helps students place attention on academics.                           | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6.  | Recess is an important element in classroom management and behavior guidance. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7.  | Recess enhances physical development.   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8.  | Recess is viewed as an off-task behavior.                                     | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9.  | Recess is messy, noisy, and unstructured activity time.                       | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. | Students can learn how to socialize with peers through recess.                | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

#### Part II. What recess practices do you use in your school?

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|
| 11. | Children can choose, plan, and expand their creativity during recess.                     | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 12. | All grade levels, kindergarten through fifth, have a daily scheduled recess.              | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 13. | Children participate in regular periods of active, free play with peers at recess.        | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 14. | Recess is scheduled separately from physical education.                                   | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 15. | There is a specific recess schedule that teachers and students must follow.               | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16. | Recess should be supervised, unstructured activity time.                                  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17. | Increased school accountability and students testing procedures have reduced recess time. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

#### Part III. What are your consideration(s) in developing recess time?

- |  |                             |   |   |   |   |
|--|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 18.  | State and local budget cuts | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 19.  | Frequency of recess         | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 1 = Strongly Disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Agree    4 = Strongly Agree |                             |   |   |   |   |
| 20.  | Location of recess          | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 21.  | Length of recess            | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 22. Developing student rules in recess | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 23. Age of the students                | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 24. Attention span                     | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 25. Instructional time                 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 26. Appropriate supervision            | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Part IV. What are your guidelines of implementing recess time in your school?

- |  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 27. Appropriate supervision of activities in recess is needed.                     | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 28. Teachers should be assigned specific responsibilities in recess.               | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 29. A safe environment should be provided at recess location.                      | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 30. Student rules in recess should be strictly implemented.                        | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 31. Timing of recess should be closely monitored.                                  | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 32. Recess can be withheld from students for disciplinary and/or academic reasons. | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Part V. Demographic Please circle the letter that is the most appropriate response.

33. Gender:    a. Female    b. Male
34. Number of students in your school:  
       a. 400 or less    b. 401-600    c. 601-800    d. 801-1,000    e. 1,001-1,200    f. 1,201 or above
35. Racial/Ethnic origin:  
       a. American Indian/Alaskan Native    b. Asian or Pacific Islander    c. Hispanic    d. African American  
       e. Caucasian    f. Other
36. Years of experience as principal:                    a. 0-5    b. 6-10    c. 11-15    d. 16-20    e. over 20
37.     Highest Degree Earned:            a. Master's    b. Specialist's    c. Doctorate
38.     School Location:    a. Suburban    b. Metro urban    c. Rural
39.     Percentage of your students that participate in the free or reduced lunch program:  
       a. 0-20%    b. 20-40    c. 40-60%    d. 60-80%    e. 80-100%
40.     Percentage of minority in your school:    a. 0-20%    b. 20-40%    c. 40-60%    d. 60-80%    e. 80-100%



## APPENDIX D

## POSTCARD

Dear Principal:

My name is Lori Morrison, and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Georgia Southern University. If you have completed my questionnaire, thank you so much for your assistance. This postcard is a reminder for your assistance in gathering data regarding recess. If you agree to participate, please complete the questionnaire and place in the addressed envelope provided for you prior to this postcard.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research project or have misplaced the questionnaire, please call me, Lori Morrison, at 904-556-8494, or you can contact me at [lorimmorrison@yahoo.com](mailto:lorimmorrison@yahoo.com). You may also contact my academic advisor, Dr. Barbara Mallory, at 912-681-5307 or [bmallory@georgiasouthern.edu](mailto:bmallory@georgiasouthern.edu). Should you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, I encourage you to contact the IRB coordinator at The Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-5465.

Let me thank you in advance for your assistance in studying this important question. I realize you are very busy this time of the year and assure you this should take no more than ten minutes of your time. The results should provide districts in Georgia with valuable information concerning the implementation of recess in Georgia elementary schools. Please respond by Friday, March 10, 2006.

Respectfully,

Lori Morrison